

MARLOWE'S INTERPRETATION OF HISTORY:
FROM INTERNAL EVIDENCE IN HIS DRAMATIC WORKS

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CHAPTER I

HISTORY and DRAMA

In viewing the birth and development of drama from the most ancient times till the present one cannot help but note the close relationship between history and drama. Drama, which in it's widest application means the impersonation of certain characters and an imitation of their action, has it's beginning so far in antiquity that it is difficult to speak with any certainty as to its precise origin. However, most scholars are agreed upon the fact that religion and it's attendant rites was the cradle of this literary form. The dance of the Navajo Indians of New Mexico, the Esquimeux of Alaska and New Columbia and the aborigines in Australasia are evidences today of the ritual dances of primitive man. These dances involve, besides rhythmic movement, mime and masks. The masks are used to depict crude attempts at characterisation. Events of tribal importance e.g. successful hunting expeditions are the themes; sometimes the dances are records of tribal history e.g. they relate the exploits of a famous warrior-king, now deceased. The characters impersonated were either diety itself or semi-divine heroes and the end was either didactic or the propitiation of providence. The characters impersonated were for the primitive audience "historical"

They were a part of history -- not merely part of the history of the particular community which performed and watched, but part of the larger history of human life. The gods were as "real" as the

humans they created and ruled. For this primitive world all that existed, all that acted by thought, word or deed was a part of history and a part of the truth. This holds true not only in a survey of western dramatic literature, but is true of all drama in all the world.

The earliest extant Sanskrit plays draw their themes and figures from the lives and deeds of the early Aryan settlers in the Indo-Gangetic plain. Shortly after Alexander's invasion Kautilya wrote the first Indian chronicle play Mrichikatika dealing with the political intrigues which led to the coronation of his patron, Chandra Gupta Maurya. In the 5th century A.D. when Kalidas was writing those plays which were so admired by Goethe, he too borrowed from historical and semi-historical narrative. The most notable example of such a debt incurred by Kalidas is his drama Shakuntala.

In Japanese Noh drama there are ghost narratives -- spirits from the dead are invoked to appear and relate their stories. Here again the dramatist relied on medieval chronicles for a choice of character and incident. The most popular and fruitful source was the lives of the Samurai. Early Chinese musico-drama very often undertook to relate the exploits of a warrior-king. A much loved and often performed drama told the story of an ambitious war-lord who marched northwards and westwards into the mountains conquering the tribes resident in these areas and capturing their women-folk, amongst whom was the tragic heroine who died in an attempt to save her people from massacre.

In the western world the earliest dramatists of note were the Greeks. However, centuries before the glorious Athenian epoch, the Egyptians had celebrated the cult of Isis and Ra with religious rites incorporating a strong element of the dramatic. In the Middle

East the cult of Mithra and the Assyrian priesthood commemorated the cycle of Life (physically symbolised by the annual flooding of the Tigris and Euphrates) by ceremonies of a distinctly dramatic flavour. The Greek tragic poet was restricted by rule to themes of myth and legend. Aristotle made a distinction between poetry and history by defining the scope of poetry to that of general truth and history as being confined to a particular truth. The difference as can be easily understood is one of degree and pertains more to a shift in emphasis rather than a complete disparity making comparison impossible. Further Aristotle underlined and emphasised the value of history when he maintained that legend lent itself to dramatic treatment particularly well, not merely because it was impressive or beautiful, but more importantly, because it was credible. Too great a flight of fancy destroys the illusion irrevocably as one sees so often in theatrical productions of an inferior kind.

The first name of any lasting importance is that of Phrynicus of Athens, the son of Polyphradmon. He wrote a large number of plays and was honoured at several Olympic gatherings. The very titles of his plays suggest the fundamental role of history. His earliest play was "The Egyptians". "The Capture of Miletus" deals with a theme from recent Greek history -- the victory over Persians under Xerxes by the Athenians in 404 B.C.. "The Phoenician Women" dealt with the famous victory at Salamis which was treated amongst others by Aeschylus also. It is interesting to note that in this play Phrynicus uses the historian Themistocles as his choregus.

Aeschylus deals with the Persian Empire under Xerxes and his defeat at Salamis in "The Men of Persia". Repeated contrasts are shown between the glorious reign of the now dead Darius and the colossal failure of his heir, Xerxes. In this play Aeschylus uses

the very same material as Herodotus does when writing his history. In his "Orestia" trilogy the history of Thebes -- its Wars, it's allies and political vicissitudes form a consistent background for the drama. Sophocles uses the Trojan War again and again for his characters and background, the most famous of his plays dealing with "Ajax". Euripides too found in the Homeric legend a very fruitful mine of rich material for dramatic treatment. In "The Suppliants" he uses an even from Athenian history -- the Thebans refused burial to the Argive chieftains killed in battle against them. The Athenians espoused the cause of the bereaved mothers and compelled the restitution of the bodies. Showing a very modern sympathy and a most enlightened approach to the problem of war in "The Trojan Women" Euripides movingly depicts the horrors and misery of war for the defeated and the captives.

The Greeks bequeathed their dramatic tradition to the Romans who in turn fostered the founding of Christendom. The Latin dramatists also turned to history and legend for their dramatic subjects. Seneca in "Troas" depicts the vengeance of the Greeks on the surviving Trojans after the fall of Troy. It may be interesting to note here that history's liason with drama was confined to the tragic muse. Comedy, by it's very nature -- the imitation of low types, satirical material and greater freedom of inventiveness -- could never be so closely allied to history. History and legend gave to these early play-wrights not only a series of related events but also a set of persons and figures who moved in a pattern of complex relationships, and these characters and their actions were convenient pegs by means of which the dramatist could "point a moral". Undoubtedly the escapades of the ancient gods and goddesses in Europe and Asia are a rich harvest of delightful pranks. Perhaps the dramatists

chose to ignore this because of a great respect and veneration for the past, specially in the early literary tradition. Somehow they tended to think of their fore-fathers as belonging to a golden age which could not be mocked at or treated lightly. Historical comedy would have to take into account human follies -- and these obviously could not exist in the "good old days". An exaggerated veneration and blind devotion to the past made the writing of historical comedy impossible.

With the fall of the Roman Empire and the breakdown of civilization in Europe all the arts declined, including drama. During the long years of the Dark Ages Europe blundered through gloomy centuries of torpor and confusion and finally emerged into the light of Christendom. Thanks to the vivid memories of the last days of Roman Imperialism -- the decadence and flagrant immorality of the later emperors -- the fathers of the early Church inveighed most heavily against the theatre. Not even in the most volatile pamphlets of the Puritans can there be found such sombre and vehement condemnation of the stage as one finds in Origen.

However the ebullient spirits of the human race could not remain forever supine and slowly drama began to resurrect itself. As at first, with the ancient and primitive world, so too with the medieval, drama was closely allied with religious ceremony. It is outside the scope of this thesis to enumerate in detail the growth of medieval drama. Let it suffice to mention here that the very first steps were taken by the "tropes" and the antiphonal singing in the choir. Thus drama passed in easy stages to the full fledged cycles of miracles.

In England the "miracles" dealt with the lives of the saints and Biblical figures and the "moralities" grew up out of the sermon or "exumplum" viz., they illustrated some aspect of Christian living.

and demonstrated the plan of salvation. In the miracles or mysteries the subject matter was taken directly from Holy Writ. Only those characters and incidents were permitted which had direct sanction from the Scriptures -- or as in the case of the "unguentarius" (ointment-seller), characters which though not expressly mentioned, can safely be assumed to have existed. It is here we find the hand of history. Since drama was heavily biased in favour of religion the great source-book was the Bible. For these early churchmen the Bible was Holy Writ, directly revealed through the agency of the Holy Spirit, and therefore literally true. The Bible was therefore not only the revealed word but also historical truth. It contained not only the early history and antecedents of the Jewish nation, but told the history of mankind. Adam and Eve were as real human figures as the Assyrians or Pontius Pilate. For the medieval man the Bible meant exactly what it said.

The connection between history and drama is closest in the field of tragedy. The death of man, especially of one well placed in society and a leader of the community, cannot help but deeply impress all beholders. This was basically the formula for medieval tragedy as we find in Lydgate's "Fall of Princes" and the "Mirror for Magistrates". The fall of a king affects the entire kingdom and thus his fall attains a magnitude above the death of a common man. Skelton's "Of the Death of the Noble Prince, Kynge Edward the Forth" shows Edward contemplating his death and realising that though Fortune had raised him to greatness, his power and wealth were helpless in the face of death. De Causibus tragedy was in vogue. Lastly, history is particularly fruitful for tragic usage as it regularly furnishes events of such a nature that the twin passions of tragedy as noted by Aristotle -- pity and terror -- may conveniently and

naturally be aroused.

In England during the Middle Ages when a strong tradition of native drama was being built up under the auspices of the Roman Church there was little history included in the dramatic material, except, of course, that which was warranted by Scriptural texts. But as the mystery and morality plays developed and as Latin was discarded in favour of the vernacular, contemporary social commentary and reference to public events of note which were common knowledge began to be included. In the "Second Shepherd's Play" the shepherds speak tellingly of the troubles of agricultural workers and in the play of "Herod" the soldiers complain of their hard lot. From this it was but a step to the introduction of actual historical figures on the stage. At first both actual and symbolic figures appeared together e.g. on the same stage one finds two characters, one named Kyng John and the other Ecclesiastical Corruption. It is easy to see the development when noting the simple narration of the story of the Prodigal Son developing into a representation of all kinds of prodigality. The morality which was based on theological contrasts and conflicts evolved to depict political controversy. As the thunder of the Renaissance rolled over England politics and religion began to mingle in a complex of motive and history made further in-roads into drama.

"The old allegory of man's duty towards God, within His Catholic and universal church was narrowed toward the allegory of men's duties as subjects under a God-representing king"¹

John Skelton's play "Magnyfycence" has a morality framework but deals with political ideas and those qualities necessary in a good

1. Rossiter, A.P. "English Drama from early times to the Elizabethans" in I. Ribner, The English History Play in the Age of Shakespeare. Princeton University Press, 1957, p. 35.

king.

"It portrays an actual historical situation and uses that situation to teach secular political theory which bears particularly upon immediate political problems".²

The interlude which partook of both morality and mystery elements and was yet quite secular in tone explored history for convenient formulas and patterns e.g. "Fulgens and Lucrece" re-tells an actual event from classical Rome. The happy fluidity and expansiveness enabled English drama to move forward at the rapid pace that it did and was responsible for that peculiar dramatic concoction -- the chronicle play. Prof. Schelling in "The English History Play" makes it quite clear that the history play is, in his opinion, the peculiar gift of the English genius to the world of drama.

This type of play -- the history play -- was slow in evolving and drew upon many existing dramatic veins for strength and was nurtured in no small measure by changes in social and political patterns of society as a whole. It has been extremely difficult, if not impossible, to make any definitive statement as to the date and name of the first history play but this much is certain, that by the middle of the sixteenth century it was a popular and easily recognisable dramatic form in England. The first English tragedy on classical lines -- "Gorbuduc" is entirely dependent on history for its material. However the history play reached its fullest flowering and maturity in the reign of Queen Elizabeth I and it is doubtful if the history play has ever again attained that rich plenitude.

The first clear treatment of a historical figure in dramatic form is Marlowe's "Tamberlane". Kyd's "Spanish Tragedy" was, at the time, a popular piece and drew on actual events in Spain for its origin. Beginning with Marlowe's "Tamberlane" there are myriad

2. Ibid. p. 36.

plays where history is inseparable from drama -- perhaps the finest achievements being Shakespeare's dramatised-history of England from King John down till Henry VIII. The Elizabethans so characteristically made the English history play their own that in modern times when Maxwell Anderson desired to match their achievements, for subjects he chose the very age he wished to emulate -- "Anne of a Thousand Days" and "Elizabeth the Queen". The Elizabethans firmly established the domain of history on the stage and later centuries were only footnotes to the grandeur of their achievements. Milton delved into Hebrew history for "Samson Agonistes" and the Restoration writers of heroic tragedy again and again sought the help of history to build their background and provide the characters e.g. Dryden's "All for Love" and "Conquest of Granada".

The Romantic poets of the nineteenth century who made abortive attempts in the dramatic field all chose historical subjects for their themes. Wordsworth wrote "The Borderers", Byron wrote several dramas ("Marino Faliero", "Sardanapalus", "The Two Foscari" etc.), Shelley wrote "The Cenci", Keats "Otho", Tennyson "Queen Mary" and "Becket" -- to say nothing of Scott's numerous books which revived an interest in the days of chivalry and knight-errantry.

The resurgence of dramatic activity in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries with all the wild experiments in forms, modes and ideologies has once again shown the close alliance between history and drama. If one takes Bernard Shaw as an early example of the "new drama" several of his plays come to mind -- "Caesar and Cleopatra" uses history in a very real sense for the basis of the action, whereas "Arms and the Man" uses the Serbo-Bulgarian war of 1885 as a necessary background for the main plot. Hardy uses history

almost with medieval vigour in "The Dynasts" to support and illustrate his views on the capriciousness of Destiny. In more recent times James Bridie uses history combined with a goodly share of satire and whimsy in his plays e.g. "Jonah and the Whale".

With the attempts at restoring poetic drama to a position of glory on the stage in England history once again gives to the playwrights themes of suitable eminence and magnitude. Christopher Fry exploits the story of the Israelites in Egypt for "The First Born" and medieval Europe is the intellectual background for "The Lady's not for Burning". T.S. Eliot's most significant dramatic achievement -- "Murder in the Cathedral" takes up the very old theme of Thomas Becket. Across the Atlantic Eugene O'Neill used history in "Marco's Millions" when treating of the adventures of Marco Polo and in "Mourning becomes Electra" transferred the whole of the Greek legend to Civil War America and uses the Civil War as a convenient frame-work for his theme. Arthur Miller uses colonial America and the Salem witch-hunts for dramatic purposes in "The Crucible".

Psychology and psycho-analysis, having gained a firm footing in modern life, could not but influence drama as well. The new mode of dealing with history was to probe behind the events and the men who made them for the hidden motives buried deep in the human unconscious. Now no longer do the great figures of history stride the boards like colossi, but rather lie horizontally on the analyst's couch. Jean Anouilh's play on Becket, John Osborne's treatment of Luther and Robert Bolt's story of Sir Thomas More in "A Man for all Seasons" are fine examples of "humanised" history on the stage. On the continent, particularly with the French existential theatre this kind of approach to history is very common e.g. "Altona". A very recent example of a play which opened on Broadway in the -

winter of 1964-65 is Hochhuth's play about Pope Pius XII indifference to the plight of European Jews during the Second World War.

One therefore comes to note that the dramatist may use history in many ways, sometimes concentrating on single figures as in the play "Anastasia", or on a particular event in the life of an important character as in T.S. Eliot's "Murder in the Cathedral", or in exposing the deeper levels of character and motivation as in Osborne's "Luther" or sometimes as a general background for a human drama as in Frecht's epic of the Thirty Years War "Mother Courage".

However this usage of history is extremely contemporary in tone and emphasis. The chronicle or history play which was so popular in Elizabethan times was a unique dramatic genre and never again has the English dramatic genius been able to write with such vitality and brilliance in this particular field. Most of the Tudor writers of this kind of drama were generally writing to a formula -- the support and justification of Tudor absolutism. Perhaps this is one of the important reasons why this form of drama never again achieved the vogue it once enjoyed as such a political necessity did not make itself felt again. Also with the growth and development of historiography and a wider application of the term history the doings of individuals lost their paramount importance and glamour. With the spread of democracy the brilliant leader lost some of his gloss, and with the advent of psychology the cynosure of public adulation was very often seen to have feet of clay.

CHAPTER II

HISTORY -- MEDIEVAL AND RENAISSANCE

It is necessary for the purpose of this thesis -- Marlowe's understanding of history -- that before one attempts to analyse or discover Marlowe's sense of the historical, to distinguish clearly the methods, aims and approaches to history in medieval times and to attempt to define any changes the Renaissance may have brought about in historiography. Before one proceeds with this distinction between medieval and modern, one must remember that it was only in the eighteenth century that history was divided into ancient, medieval and modern. Prior to that it was customary to think and write of history either in universal terms following the mode of Christian historians or to write of epochs or particular nations. In the eighteenth century, when there was the triple division of history, the Middle Ages were referred to as the Dark Ages, looked upon with contempt and loathing, all glory and honour being heaped upon the Renaissance. One of the scholars of the times boasted -- "I know nothing of those ages which knew nothing". For the eighteenth century rationalist the Middle Ages were a compound of ignorance and superstition.

"The (Middle Ages) were considered to be unworthy of study; they were a mere interlude of blackness between the dim light of classical antiquity and the high noon of eighteenth century rationalism".¹

It was only with the Romantic Movement of the early nineteenth

1. Hearnshaw, F.J.W. ed. The Social and Political Ideas of some Great Thinkers of the Renaissance and the Reformation. Barnes and Noble, N.Y., 1949; p. 10.

century that the Middle Ages come into their own.

"The Middle Ages were once more exalted, their study renewed, their writings re-edited and disseminated afresh, their glories depicted in glowing colours, their ideals reaffirmed, their institutions and practices re-established".²

The Middle Ages presented to the world a historical picture dominated by Christianity in its Thomistic pattern. Thomism being Hellenic in tradition never devoted much time to the problem of history. History is Hebraic in origin, the Old and New Testaments depicting a history not only of the Hebrews but a history that is integral to Christianity itself. However this Christian view of history is difficult for a non-christian to understand and accept.

"For the Christian view of history is not merely a belief in the direction of history by divine providence, but it is a belief in the intervention by God in the life of man by direct action at certain definite points in time and space".³

For the medieval historian there was a dual aspect of history-spiritual and temporal, to parallel man's dual existence in the eternal and temporal world's. Man was expected to live in this world, but he was not of this world and therefore all his actions and plans were to be judged by the elevated principles of the next world. All events of history were interpreted and had value in as much as they threw light on the Divine Plan which was to be finally perfected in the world to come.

Before Europe emerged from the Dark Ages the only history known, and idea of historiography practised, was that of the Greeco-Roman civilization. Classical history was based upon an optimistic idea of human nature and a firm faith, that by the exercise of his intellect and reason man could control his destiny and influence his

2. Ibid., pp. 11-12.

3. Dawson, C., Dynamics of World History. Sheed and Ward, London, 1957, p. 235.

future. Humanism was the controlling force and the motto was that man is the measure of all things. Man and his institutions e.g. the city-states of the Greeks, were the centre of history.

With the emergence of Christendom this whole concept was overthrown. Man was no longer the great centre of the world nor were his doings to be applauded. Man becomes a blind creature of unreliable passions and impulses, totally incapable of any goodness without the grace of God. Christianity brought the concept of original sin. Ever since Adam's primal disobedience man's reason is clouded and he is unable to achieve his ends because he cannot plan or act with precision and ease.

"That inability to achieve ends clearly conceived in advance, missing one's mark, is no longer regarded as accidental but as a permanent element in human nature arising out of the condition of man as man ... Human action, on this view, is not designed in view of preconceived ends by the intellect, it is actuated a tergo by immediate and blind desire".⁴

When man's action happens to be wise and good it is the wisdom and goodness of God manifesting itself through a human agency.

Secondly man, nations, and the state were no longer eternal constants as depicted by the ancients. For the classicists the Grecian city-state or Rome was an eternal substance "and human action received it's value in its relation to this fixed substance." For the medievalist only God was eternal and constant and thus all human action had to be measured by the yard-stick of God's will as manifested through the Holy Mother, the Church.

A natural corollary of the above was that history meant the working out of the Divine Plan not within a particular community, nor a particular place, nor a certain epoch -- but in eternity, in all space and time.

4. Collingwood, R.G., The Idea of History, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1946, p. 46.

"Thus each human agent knows what he wants and pursues it, but he does not know why he wants it: the reason why he wants it is that God has caused him to want it in order to advance the process of realising His purpose --- Man exists merely as a means to the accomplishment of God's end, for God has created him only in order to work out His purpose in terms of human life".⁵

This Divine Plan was partly revealed to some -- generally the elect, but the vast Gentile world, though unaware of it, were still very much a part of it.

"The rulers of the Gentiles were also the instruments of divine judgement, even though they did not understand the purposes they served. Each of the world empires in turn had it's divinely appointed task to perform, and when the task was finished their power came to an end and they gave place to their successors".⁶

However the larger share of the responsibility for furthering the Divine Plan for human salvation rested on the shoulders of Christendom because it was thought that since the truth of God's word was given to them the more it behooved them to act in accordance with it. Christians were supposed to be aware of "the growth of the seed of eternity in the womb of time".⁷

"Now the Christians not only believe in existence of a divine plan in history, they believe in the existence of a human society which is in some measure aware of this plan and capable of cooperating with it".⁸

The old theories of a chosen people, a chosen state, a nation with special divinely given privileges were thrown overboard. All men were now equal in the eyes of heaven, all equal partners in the working out of human destiny. This view of history "treats history as a play written by God, but a play wherein no character is the author's favourite character".⁹

5. Ibid., p. 48.

6. Dawson, Christopher e.d. John J. Mulley Dynamics of World History, Sheed & Ward, London, 1957, p. 238.

7. Ibid., p. 249.

8. Ibid., p. 249.

9. Collingwood. R.C. The Idea of History, Clarendon Press, Oxon, p. 50.

This view found classical expression in St. Augustine's City of God, wherein man's dual citizenship of the Divine and Earthly cities is fully explored and the interpenetration of both states explained. For good government the City of Man must be in agreement with the City of God. The great emphasis on the human agency in the fulfilment of the Divine Plan led to the idea of "history as biography" --- the lives of the Christian kings and heroes being of paramount importance.

"And if on the one hand this seems to reduce the importance of history and of the present life, on the other hand it enhances their value by giving them an eternal significance".¹⁰

This view of history was obviously tinged with fatalism and gave little or no importance to the individual and his capacities. All was in the lap of God and what He gave He might also choose to take away. This attitude was reflected in such works of literature as Lygate's "The Fall of Princes" and "The Mirror for Magistrates".

With the coming of the Renaissance this attitude was changed. New forces - nationalism, humanism and secularism - could not but influence trends in historiography. The most fundamental shift in emphasis was in the role of the human individual, who was now the centre and focus of all action. Man was the maker of his own destiny and was a creature of seemingly limitless capabilities. Hamlet gives expression to this very sentiment in his apostrophe to man.

"What a piece of work is man! How noble in reason! How infinite in faculties! in form and moving, how express and admirable! in action, how like an angel! in apprehension, how like a god! the beauty of the world! the paragon of animals".¹¹

But the legacy of the Middle Ages was unavoidable and we find that whereas the Renaissance was a re-birth and a re-discovery of

10. Dawson, C. "The Dynamics of World History" e.d. John J. Mulloy, Sheed & Ward, London, p. 243.

11. Shakespeare, W. Complete Works The Oldham Press, London, Hamlet 2. 11. p. 1141.

classical civilization, in the understanding of man the Renaissance followed more the medieval than the Hellenic pattern. The latter emphasised human intellect and reason and the Middle Ages emphasised man as a creature of impulse and passion. For the Renaissance we find that :

"History became the history of human passions, regarded as necessary manifestations of human nature".¹²

On the other hand the Renaissance drank deep from the classical springs of Humanism. Man was filled with a new energy and the recent scientific and geographic discoveries and accomplishments filled him with enthusiasm and the thirst for adventure founded upon the sure belief that all things were possible for him -- the greatest and noblest of God's creation.

"The humanist consciousness, which was the result of the double communion with nature and antiquity, diverted it's contemplation from the image of the spiritual man to that of the natural man. The discovery of his natural forces and of a new consciousness upon their basis inspired man with a youthful confidence in himself and his creative possibilities. Man's forces appeared to be boundless, and there seemed to exist no limits to human creation either in art or science, political or social life".¹³

The quintessence of this spirit is to be found in the concept of "virtu" as found in the writings of Brunschelli, Castiglione, and Ariosto. This meant virility, courage, energy, the capacity for swift thought and action on personal initiative -- quite the contrary of the excellencies of humility and peacefulness advocated by Christendom.

However it must not be concluded that the entire system of medieval thought was overthrown by the humanist scholars.

"The Elizabethan conception of world order was in it's outline medieval although it has discarded much medieval details".¹⁴

12. Collingwood R.G. The Idea of History. Clarendon Press, Oxon, 1946, p. 57.

13. Berdyaev, Nicholas. The Meaning of History, Geoffrey Poles, London, 1949, p. 132.

14. Tillyard, E.M.W. Shakespeare's History Plays, Chatto & Windus, London, 1959, p. 11.

One of the significant carry-over traits of the Middle Ages was the Augustinian concept of history as biography. The influx of humanism only made this point of view all the stronger. By emphasising human action and making mankind aim at the ideal of "virtu" the Renaissance emphasised the role of the individual in the making of history. This is evidenced by the number of "guide-books" for the education of rulers that were written at the time e.g. Machiavelli's "The Prince" and Castiglione's "The Book of the Governor". Spencer's "Fairie Queene" also allegorically depicts the ideal man exhibiting the ideal virtues.

Another concept inherited by the Renaissance was the concept of the great "chain of being". All created things from the lowest upto God Himself were fitted into a neat hierarchial pattern. The welfare and salvation of the whole as well as of each of the component parts depended on each one recognising and maintaining their appointed place in the universal scheme. Any attempt to change this order, any endeavour to rise higher or to push another lower in the scale led to confusion and ultimately destruction. Sir John Fortescue, the fifteenth century jurist has explained this very well thus:-

"God created as many different kinds of things as He did creatures, so that there is no creature which does not differ in some respect from all other creatures, and by which it is in some respect superior or inferior to all the rest. So that from the highest angel down to the lowest of his kind there is absolutely not found an angel that has not a superior and inferior, nor from man down to the meanest worm is there any creature which is not in some respect superior to one creature and inferior to another. So that there is nothing which the bond of order does not embrace. And since God has thus regulated all creatures, it is impious to think that he left unregulated the human race, which he made the highest of all earthly creatures".¹⁵

15. Fortescue, Sir John. Complete Works e.d. Lord Clermont, London 1869 I p. 322 quoted. Tillyard E.M.W. "Shakespeare's History Plays", Chatto & Windus, London, 1956, p. 12.

It is this concept which is the basis for the legend of Lucifer, and Milton drew heavily upon it for his notions of the rebellion of Satan and his consequent expulsion from Paradise. This concept is clearly feudal in pattern and spirit and a famous exposition is given by Shakespeare in "Triolus and Cresside" through the mouth of Ulysees.

Thirdly the spiritual legacy of the medieval Dance of Death was prevalent in the mind of Renaissance England. Medieval theology with its reverberant sermons on the permanence and glory of the next world in contrast to the sinful mortality of this, could not help being pre-occupied with the question of death. Renaissance Humanism fired the human spirit, emphasised the concept that though man was made in the image of God, he could not forget that eventually the paths of glory lead but to the grave. From the innumerable examples of such a concept one is forced to illustrate by just a few:

"The stretching arms, the yawning breath, which I to bedward use
Are patterns of the pangs of death, when life will me refuse,
And of my bed each sundry part in shadows doth resemble
The sundry shapes of death, whose dart shall make my flesh
tremble.

My bed itself is like the grave, my sheets the winding sheet,
My clothes the mold which I must have to cover me most meet;
The hungry fleas which frisk so fresh, to Worm I can compare,
Which greedily shall gnaw my flesh and leave the bones full
bare.

The Waking cock, that early crows to wear the night away,
Puts in my mind the trump that blows before the Latter Day.
And as I rise up lustily when sluggish sleep is past,
So hope I to rise joyfully to judgement at the last".¹⁶

--- "Gascoigne's Good-night" -- George Gascoigne (1539-1578)

"It is therefore Death alone that can suddenly make man to know himself. He tells the proud and insolent that they are but abjects and humbles them at the instant; makes them cry, complain and repent, yes, even to hate their forepast happiness. He takes the account of the rich, and proves him a beggar, a naked beggar which hath interest in nothing but in the gravel that fills his mouth. He holds a glass before the eyes of the most beautiful, and makes them see therein

16. Lamson, Roy and Smith, Hallett e.d. "The Golden Hind" Anthology of Elizabethan Prose and Poetry W.W. Norton & Co. N.Y. 1956; p. 189.

their deformity and rottenness, and they acknowledge it".¹⁷

-- "The History of the World" Sir Walter Raleigh (1552-1618)

"My prime of youth is but a frost of cares,
My feast of joy is but a dish of pain.
My crop of corn is but a field of tares,
And all my good is but vain hope of gain;
The day is past, and yet I saw no sun,
And now I lie, and now my life is done.

I sought my death and found it in my womb,
I looked for life and saw it was a shade,
I trod the earth and saw it was my tomb,
And now I die, and now I was but made;
My glass is full, and now my glass is run,
And now I live, and now my life is done".¹⁸

-- "Tichborne's Elegy" Chidock Tichborne (1558-1586)

Where the break away from the middle ages was most significant was in the influence that humanism had on thought and temperament. Man was the measure of all things and history was "humanised" viz. the Divine Plan was thought less of and the value of human action per se was of more value. The challenge of Humanism as defined by Jacques Maritain is:

"It (humanism) at once demands that man make use of all the potentialities he holds within him, his creative powers and the life of reason, and labours to make the powers of the physical world the instruments of his freedom".¹⁹

Since history began to emphasise human action in human terms the value of these actions for other humans assumed greater proportions. The Renaissance valued history for three reasons. Firstly, since all men desire glory, to know that their deeds will be recorded for posterity is a great incentive to attempt great things. Now it is personal glory that is important, not the glory of God revealed in human action. Secondly, and following from above, history, being a compendium of facts, preserves deeds from oblivion. No longer does

17. Ibid., p. 517.

18. Ibid., p. 577.

19. Maritain, Jacques. "True Humanism" p. xii. quoted: Mahood M.M. "Poetry and Humanism". Jonathan Cape, London 1950, p. 12.

the historian exclaim "vanitas Venitatum". Lastly, history helps us to foresee the future and prepare for it, it serves also to warn and guide us on the basis of past experience. For the medieval historian this would have been a waste of time, as for him the future lay in the next world and the experience of this world had didactic value only in reference to eternity.

"History provided innumerable examples of men who fell from prosperity, and especially of men who fell because of a single passion or error: and it is from them that we may best learn a practical lesson".²⁰

As with the Middle Ages where the concepts were crystallised in the Civitate Dei of St. Augustine, so the quintessence of Renaissance historical and political thought may be found in Nicolo Machiavelli's "The Prince". This one book influenced European politics for over a century, more than any other single work. Machiavelli gave his name to a whole system of thought and action, which unfortunately more misunderstood than correctly appreciated, has come down to us till today.

Throughout "The Prince", "Discourses on Livy" and "The Art of War" Machiavelli makes it clear that human nature is a mixture of good and evil and that human nature can never change. The medievalist would agree with the first premise but not the second. Machiavelli based his assumptions on contemporary Renaissance Italy and certainly Cesare Borgia was one of his ideals. Stern humanism tempered by unflinching rationality when viewing the nature and action of human beings led Machiavelli to conclude that the human species was cruel, avaricious, deceitful and corrupt. To rule such a creature made wily statemanship and duplicity necessary. Order and progress must be

20. Tillyard, E.M.W. "Shakespeare's History Plays". Chatto & Windus, London, 1959, p. 56.

enforced by any means and the end will always justify the method no matter how immoral.

"Where it is an absolute question of the welfare of our country, we must admit of no considerations of justice or injustice, or mercy or cruelty, or praise or ignominy, but putting all else aside we must adopt whatever course will save the nations liberty and existence".²¹

At one stroke the union between Civitate Dei and Civitate Terra is severed irrevocably. Christian ethics and morality are overthrown as they, for Machiavelli, emphasise the wrong virtues of weakness and humility. Religion makes man soft and urges him to patiently endure his lot, asking him to neglect and ignore this world.

"Our religion has rather glorified meek and contemplative men than men of action. It has placed the supreme good in humility and poorness of spirit, and in contempt for worldly things ... Thus the world has fallen a prey to the wicked, who have found men readier, for the sake of going to paradise, to submit to blows rather than to resent them".²²

Machiavelli puts the good of the state above morality and if a Prince is to choose between being feared without love and loved without fear then love must be sacrificed. One of the results of this kind of thinking was the justification and glorification of war. War was one of the most obvious and easily ego-satisfying methods of self-expression and winning the kind of fame that would look well in history books.

"Peace too long maintained is enervating and disruptive; an occasional war is a national tonic, restoring discipline, vigour and unity".²³

This doctrine, along with the other sentiments expressed by Machiavelli are the direct result of the impact of humanism and secularism on the Renaissance intelligence. Man is more and more made aware that

21. Machiavelli, M. "Discourses" III, 41. quoted, Will Durrant

"The Renaissance" Simon and Schuster. N.Y. 1953, p. 141.

22. Ibid, "Discourses", II, 2. iii. p. 142.

23. Ibid, p. 559.

he is now in the fullest sense of the word the master and maker of his own destiny. With Machiavelli we find the beginnings of patriotism and the idea of a national state as against the medieval notion of Christendom and the Holy Roman Empire.

In conclusion one may sum up the main difference in historiography between the Renaissance and Middle Ages as being more of a shift in emphasis rather than in fundamentals. Both kinds of history dealt with the accumulation and tabulation of facts about significant human action. The significance of the action was largely owing to the magnitude of the agent. The human beings who were the makers of history were thought, by both schools, to partake of a fallen and corrupt nature. Both schemes of history placed Men at the mercy of Fortune. The difference lay in the reaction of Man to his environment. For the medievalist the immediate milieu was of no importance and had to be patiently endured, whereas, the vicissitudes of Fortune were the scourges of God. For the Renaissance man, Fortune was to be made the slave of the bold and adventurous spirit. This world was real and valuable and the human intellect acting in this world was capable of much --- glory was near at hand for the intrepid and courageous. History was made by man, and not by Diety. The causes for this shift in emphasis are largely humanist which in turn gave rise to nationalism, secularism, and individualism. The feudal system and the paramountcy of the Roman Church were overthrown and a more pragmatic and democratic view of policies was in operation.

CHAPTER III

MARLOWE'S READING AND EDUCATION

Before one can with any authority attempt to determine Marlowe's views on, and interpretation of, history it would perhaps be proper to try to assess his education and attempt to know what history he might have read. Of course at the very outset one must accept the fact that any definitive list of Marlowe's reading both during his educational career, and afterwards in London, is quite impossible. Before I attempt a compilation of any such list I must acknowledge my deep debt to Prof. Boas and Prof. Bakeless for their invaluable work, from which I have drawn.

In attempting to list Marlowe's reading one is aware that there are two principal sources for our information. Firstly the actual documents relating to his life at King's School, Canterbury and later on at Corpus Christi, Cambridge; and secondly internal evidence from his plays. Let it also be said here that neither source is fool-proof and in the majority of cases conjecture, supposition and inference count for more than cold fact.

"No one really knows where young Christopher Marlowe received his earliest education. His father, who later became a parish clerk, may himself have taught the boy to read and write".¹

The first documentary evidence we have of Marlowe's education is of his being awarded a scholarship by Archbishop Parker to King's School, Canterbury, on Jan. 14, 1575/79. It is a point of interest

1. Bakeless, J. "Christopher Marlowe" Jonathan Cape, London 1938, p. 41.

that he was just below the upper age limit on the date of the award. This school was one of the oldest in the country, beginning as a diocesan school attached to the Cathedral after the medieval pattern. After the Dissolution of Monasteries it was re-founded as King's School.

There is sufficient evidence to indicate the lines on which education was imparted in these cathedral schools and the aim of such education was clearly a preparation for holy orders.

"In the bishop's schools, small groups of boys were admitted as boarders in the bishop's household, usually when they were about the age of seven. Here they remained as part of the episcopal household until the age of eighteen, by which time they were obliged to decide whether they would join the clergy. It was the intention of the church that youths so educated should take holy orders and the majority did so in all the medieval centuries".²

The basic patterns and aims remained unchanged even in Renaissance times, the main emphasis being on Latin Grammar. Shakespeare and Marlowe attended the same kind of school and were taught the fundamentals in the same fashion. The boys began with Lyly's Latin "Grammar" which was aimed at a humanistic appreciation of literature.

"From Lyly boys went on to Erasmus' Institution of a Christian Man, his Conis and his Colloquia; they then proceeded to Mantuan, whom Shakespeare saluted in Love's Labour Lost, with 'Ah, good old Mantuan! ... who understandeth thee not, loves thee not.' For history the boys read Caesar, Sallust and Livy; for comedy Terence and Plautus, for tragedy, Seneca. They graduated through anthologies and collections of poetry to Ovid, Virgil and Horace. Along with all this there went a good deal of rhetoric and disputation -- the impress of which is left in Marlowe as in Shakespeare. Above all, it was the poetry, the imagination, the fabled world of Ovid that carried them both away".³

Together with the above there was undoubtedly a large dose of the Holy Scriptures and the Prayer Book for the Clergymen-to-be.

2. Arts, Frederick, B. "The Mind of the Middle Ages" Alfred A. Knoff, N.Y. 1953, p. 305.

3. Rowse, A.L. "Christopher Marlowe" MacMillan Co. London 1964, p. 12-13.

There is sufficient evidence of this in the dramatic writings.

One cannot tell if Marlowe was an outstanding scholar at school but the fact that he won a coveted scholarship apparently indicates that he was a more than average student. As regards drama, there is documentary evidence that between the years 1569 and 1588 the players from London visited Canterbury six times. Besides since the main aim of education was the knowledge and use of the Latin language the pedagogues of the day thought that dramatics was a fine way of teaching their students the use of language. Besides, the performance of plays by school boys was also a lucrative financial proposition.

"The foundation of his familiarity with Latin Literature and with the mythology of Greece and Rome must have been laid at King's School in 1579-80".⁴

His career at King's School must have been more than commonly good for he won one of the three coveted scholarships to Cambridge endowed by Archbishop Parker. Parker being a pastmaster of Corpus Christi College sent his young beneficiaries to his old college. The students chosen were "of the best and aptest scholars well instructed in their gramer and if it may be such as can make a verse".⁵ It was understood that those who received this award were ultimately to take holy orders.

Cambridge in the 1580's was a fairly large university of nearly eighteen hundred students and, as was common in all universities, the religious note was predominant. However Protestant thought and progressive religious ideas were far more prevalent at Cambridge than at Oxford. It was the centre of Lutherianism and as early as 1520 there was a small but active group of Lutheran sympathisers in

4. Boas, F.S. "Christopher Marlowe" Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1940, p.8.
5. Bakewell, J. Christopher Marlowe, Jonsthan Cape, London, 1938, p. 47.

Cambridge.

"In Cambridge especially there was much interest in the German innovations, and since 1520 a group of Lutheran sympathisers had been meeting in a local tavern. It is interesting to note that this propaganda bore fruit, for many of the leaders of the revolt came from Cambridge among them Barnes, Tyndale, Cranmer and Coverdale".⁶

Kett had been burnt at the stake for his Unitarian views and Thomas Tineaux was in trouble for his unorthodox opinions. There was apparently a strong undercurrent of questioning and skepticism -- but the main stream was predominantly Church of England.

"Masters and fellows were in holy orders. The colleges existed mainly to provide an educated clergy for the future, and the scholarship on which Marlowe came to Corpus had been established by a famous pralate to train promising lads for the priesthood of the Church of England".⁷

In 1535 by royal command Henry VIII had changed the curriculum at both universities as he felt that the original one was too heavily biased in favour of Catholicism. Now more of the classics were introduced together with Biblical literature and for the graduates a little Science. In the first year rhetoric, in the second dialectics or logic and in the last year philosophy was taught. Rhetoric was studied from Quintillian and Cicero. Petrus Ramus, the French Protestant thinker who questioned Aristotle, was the guide for dialectics and his "Logic" was the text. In The Massacre at Paris, Ramus is one of the characters and expounds his principles before he is killed. For philosophy Aristotle was the definitive authority and Marlowe makes several references to Aristotle in his works, chiefly in Dr Faustus.

Marlowe passed on from a B.A. degree to work for his Masters' Degree. For this he had to study philosophy in greater detail.

6. Lucas, Henry S. "The Renaissance and Reformation" Harper & Bros N.Y. 1936, p. 543.

7. Bakeless, J. "Christopher Marlowe" Jonsthan Cape, London 1938; p. 50.

Geometry and Greek were also studied, though at a very elementary level no doubt.

"It does not seem that Marlowe learned much Greek at Cambridge. He probably knew only the elements of the language. There is no evidence of his direct reading of Greek tragedy or epic: his effective knowledge, as with Shakespeare, all came through the Latin".⁸

The library at Cambridge must have provided a rich banquet for the hungry mind of the young scholar. Archbishop Parker, too, had made several gifts to the Corpus Christi library. There was the famous atlas of the German cosmographer Ortelius -- Theatrum orbis Ortelius which Marlowe used and quoted with all its faults in Tamperlane. In Corpus Christi there were the complete works of Holinshed and Ramus and Sinda's Lexicon where Marlowe would find the story of Hero and Leander. There was also an eight volume printed edition of Augustine's works, the largest edition of any one theologian in the entire printed book section of the library. Peter Baro, the Lady Margaret Professor of Theology at Cambridge during Marlowe's student days gave Augustine the highest place amongst the theologians. Echoes of Augustinian theology are found over and over in Marlowe's works, more particularly in Faustus. All these he must have read and consulted for his Master's Degree.

"The Master's Degree was highly esteemed by Englishmen of the Renaissance when learning was cherished like an art ... It represented as much study for as many years as a modern doctorate".⁹

At Cambridge Marlowe must have made his first acquaintance with Machiavelli though he possibly did not read the original works, but Gentillet's French reply to Machiavelli -- Contre Nicolo Machiavelli. Prof. Boas notes that parts of Tamperlane Part II

8. Rowse, A.L. "Christopher Marlowe" Macmillan & Co., London 1964 p. 25.

9. Bakeless, J. "Christopher Marlowe" Jonsthan Cape, London, 1938 p. 84.

closely parallel scenes in Orlando Furioso leading one to feel that Marlowe must have read Ariosto carefully.

Besides what one knows actually about the course of studies followed by Marlowe at Cambridge, one cannot ignore the fact that Elizabethan England was an age of great ferment and activity of every kind --- intellectual, religious, political, economic. The intellectual atmosphere was charged with provocative ideas and daily new challenges and principles were being examined. There is sufficient evidence that Marlowe's mind and imagination were exceptionally alert and receptive and it is but natural to infer that he must have been in touch with most of the intellectual movements of his days. Genius does not always need to read a book, but very often absorbs, refines and accepts, as it were, by a process of osmosis.

From internal evidence in the works of Marlowe we find that Virgil, Lucan and the overwhelming Ovid had made a great impression on Marlowe's mind. He translated Lucan's first book of Pharsalia and also Ovid's Elegies. The Tragedy of Dido draws heavily upon Virgil. At the climax he falls back upon the Latin original rather than on English rendition of the Virgil text.

The numerous allusions and references to law, medicine, astronomy, geography and other sciences indicate that Marlowe's reading was wide and if he did not get this information from books, the range and variety of his acquaintance was impressive. The fact that he was a member of that coterie of Sir Walter Raleigh's called "The Schole of Nighte" is again an indication of his intellectual powers and wide reading.

"That Marlowe also learnt Greek is suggested by a quotation given in original in Dr Faustus, but it cannot be ascertained he had a very thorough knowledge of that language, then a

very uncommon attainment of the ancient writers whom he read, Ovid, Virgil and Lucan left the strongest impression on his mind. He became familiar with Aristotle's philosophy and felt an interest in the philosophy of Ramus, whose ideas were more favourably received at Cambridge than at Oxford and who must have appealed strongly to a student who had a natural bent for argument. He read works of history he was to remember when he was writing his dramas; several of the chronicles from which he drew were to be found either in the Corpus Christi or the University library. The extent to which he used astronomy in his similes and metaphors evinces the interest he took in that science".¹⁰

There is also some evidence that the popular medieval prose romances were read with great enjoyment by Marlowe -- as they were by most Elizabethan boys. Reminiscences of Boris of Hampton and Richard Coeur de Lion appear in his writings and Lydgate's Troy Book has inspired Marlowe's version of Helen in Faustus.

"All these things, the movement of marching armies, the methods of assault or seige warfare against walled towns the lists of names of heroes and of places, the rivers of blood in the streets of conquered cities, the compulsory conversions from one faith to another, the insults hurled at the other diety, all these were to be found in the romances, more picturesquely told than in the prose chronicles or annals, and written so vividly as to appeal to a young reader".¹¹

It is interesting to note that the notions of courtly love and chivalric romance, which were a fundamental feature of these medieval tales failed to make any deep impression on Marlowe.

That Marlowe was very well versed in the Latin classics is only too obvious by his habit of breaking into convenient Latin tags e.g. quid nihi disciplus. In Edward II Leicester quotes Seneca.

"Too true it is, quem dies vidit veniens superbum
Hunc dies vidit fugiens iacentem".¹²

In Dr Faustus there is the last memorable quotation from Ovid

"O lente, lente currite noctis equi".¹³

10. Poirier, M. "Christopher Marlowe" Chatto & Windus, London 1950, p.34

11. 'Marlowe's Light reading' Miss E. Seaton, quoted Christopher Marlowe. A.L. Rowse, Macmillan & Co. London 1964, p. 19.

12. Spencer, Hazelton ed. Elizabethan Plays D.C. Heath & Co. Boston, 1933, p.131.

13. Ibid., p. 62.

And when Dido realises that Aeneas is irrevocably deserting her Marlowe relies on the splendour of the Virgilian original.

"Si bene quid de te merui, fuit sut tibi quidquam
Dulce meum, miserere domus labentis, et istam,
Oro, si quis ad-huc precibus locus, axue mentem".¹⁴

Marlowe was fortunately placed, both at Cambridge and in London, so that he could drink deep at those fountains from which Renaissance England drew its finest inspirations. He was an exceptionally gifted young man, with a mind alert to new ideas and at Cambridge he was happily placed in an environment of intellectual fervour and stimulation. Further his London associates, Alleyn, Nashe, Chapman, Walsingham, Marriot, Parnfield and Raleigh -- were all men who adorned the spacious days of Queen Bess. All were men of intelligence, and whose reading was wide and perceptive. It is as much an honour to them, as it is to Marlowe, that our poet should have been one of the group. The so called "School of Night" for all the notriety it has gained was composed of men of learning and those whose reading was wide even though it might have been perverse.

The accusations against Marlowe in the Baines Note which may read like rather grim jokes to a modern intelligence atleast indicate that Marlowe was rather well read in the Bible and other matters relating to the church and Scripture. The note would seem to imply that among other things Marlowe was somewhat aware of India and it's concept of history and Time and of the high level of culture achieved by the ancient Egyptians. A keen and receptive intelligence, such as Marlowe's undoubtedly was, would not have to peruse lengthy volumes to come upon such information. Enough was happening in his London to have furnished him with much by-the-way

14. Tucker Brook C.F. ed. The Works of Chris. Marlowe. Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1910, p. 434.

information to say nothing of the tales of the numerous explorers and merchants.

On Marlowe's reading of Machiavelli more will be said in a further chapter, but his understanding of the Italian thinker was deeper and more perceptive than one might think. Certainly Elizabethan England along with much of Western Europe enthusiastically received a very garbled and twisted view of Machiavelli and what he stood for. It would be only too easy to assume that Marlowe shared the popular mis-conceptions. Whether he actually read The Prince or The Discourses will perhaps never authoratively be decided, but it is certain that even if he didn't, Marlowe had picked up the essential elements of Machiavellian politics which he had embodied both in The Jew of Malta and The Massacre at Paris. This much may certainly be assumed, without fear of contradiction, that Marlowe was in touch with much of the best that was thought and read in Elizabethan England.

CHAPTER IV

THE TRAGEDY OF DIDO

The knottiest question in all Marlowe criticism and scholarship is the question of the date and authorship of this play. The theme and lyrical exuberance would indicate that the play came early in his literary career. The classical story and close dependence upon Vergil point back to his early academic period, and it is possible that the first sketch was prepared while Marlowe was yet at Cambridge. It was at this time that Marlowe composed the translations from Ovid and Lucan. On the other hand scholars are able to trace a logical development from *Tamberlane* to *Edward II* - a development in theme, in structure, in blank verse and in thought. But *Dido* defies the worthiest critic to place it in this pattern of development.

Another problem is created by the printing of Nashe's name along with Marlowe's on the title page. Most textual scholars are positive that nothing could be further from Marlowe's writing than the verse style of Nashe.

The title page of the first edition gives the play as the joint work of Marlowe and Nashe. But for that statement, no critic would have thought of ascribing to the latter a share in the tragedy. Not a single scene can be said to bear his stamp.¹

Tucker Brooke, whose editing of Marlowe is definitive, is equally positive that Nashe had nothing to do with the original text.

The connection of Thomas Nashe with our play is very uncertain, and on the evidence of style would seem to be

1. Poirier, M. Christopher Marlowe. Chatto and Windus, London, 1951, p. 82.

slight. There is no discernable resemblance between Nashe's only other extant dramatic work, Summer's Last Will and Testament, and any part of Dido, whereas the peculiar style of Marlowe can be recognised in almost every scene.²

This much one does know that Nashe and Marlowe were fellow-students at Cambridge, Nashe being a little junior. Further Nashe is most probably the author of the Elegy affixed to the 1594 edition of Dido. However one cannot, on the strength of this, assume collaboration with Marlowe. Nashe might have superintended the printing of his late friend's drama, or at most have made a few minor alterations for the stage. Beyond this one cannot say more. Marlowe was not one who invited collaboration, nor did he readily lend his pen to the works of others, though some scholars find traces of his hand in Shakespeare's Henry VI.

The source material for this drama poses no problem in discovery. It is clearly Books I and IV of Vergil. Not only is the story based on Vergil but some lines have been schoolboyishly transliterated. In one instance the original Latin has been quoted in full.

What has he done but cut up into dramatic scenes the end of the first book and the whole of the fourth book of the Aeneid? From Aeneas' long story, which fills the intermediate books, he has preserved only the taking of Troy. Condensed into a much briefer account ... over one third of his own lines transliterate or expand the actual text of the Aeneid.³

Marlowe's lines (in the Tucker Brooke edition) 1544-48 and again 1718-19 and 1721 are direct quotations from the original Aeneid lines 317-19, 628-9 and 660 respectively.

On the other hand he leaves out much of the omens, agencies and other *deus ex machina* the loads the original. It would appear

2. Tucker Brooke ed. The Works of Christopher Marlowe, Clarendon Press Oxford, 1910, p. 388.

3. Poirier, M. Christopher Marlowe. Chatto and Windus, London, 1951, p. 82.

as though Marlowe was concentrating more on the relationships between man and man rather than relationships between man and the universe. Here his innate humanism wins the day and he sees the story of Aeneas and Dido entirely in human terms.

With this constant eliminating of the supernatural element the action of the play is lowered from that of a half-divine contest - gods and men warring over the founding of the greatest nation of the known world - and become a common, though poignant human story of the conflict between love and the instinct for action when the two are brought sharply into contrast in the mind of one man.⁴

On the other hand Marlowe builds upon and adds many elements of his own. The story of the jealous Iarbus is one such. Iarbus is only mentioned twice, and very briefly at that, by Vergil. He is just a minor indirect agent in the Aeneid. Again, the opening episode is suggested by a mere half-line in the original epic.

..... and Ganymede taken and made a favourite.⁵

Miss Ellis-Fermor has made a careful list of Marlowe's creations in Dido.

Iarbus, who is only an indirect agent in Vergil's story, is, in Marlowe's, a jealous and ever-present rival to Aeneas and the scenes in which he appears have no precedent in Vergil's account. Anna's relation to him, again, is Marlowe's addition as are five or six of the most important dialogues between Aeneas and Dido (including the scene in the cave) which are all developed from single hints in the original. In the same way, the dialogue between Jupiter and Ganymede which serves as prologue, the speeches between the Trojans when they meet and recognise their fellow-countrymen in Carthage, the passages between Dido and Cupid, between Dido and Anna, and between the Nurse and Cupid are all without parallel in the Aeneid.⁶

4. Ellis-Fermor, U. Christopher Marlowe. Methuen and Co., London, 1927, p. 19.

5. Vergil. The Aeneid. trans. Cecil D. Lewis. Double Day Anchor Books, N.Y. 1952. p. 13 (All further references from The Aeneid will be given from this version).

6. Ellis-Fermor, U. Christopher Marlowe. Methuen and Co., London, 1927, p. 20.

Thus one sees very clearly that despite his academic training Marlowe was no pedant, but was wise enough to recognise good dramatic material when he saw it. He took this material and made it uniquely his own by weaving around it an iridescent rainbow of his poetic fancy. Vergil is thus for Marlowe a starting point for spinning a many-coloured web of delight.

Prof. Knutowski has exerted himself to show Ovidian overtones and sources in this text - but these, if they do exist are largely accidental. Two other plays in Latin on the same subject were written earlier, but it is doubtful if Marlowe took anything from them. Halliwell's Dido was performed at Cambridge in 1564 and Gager's play at Oxford in 1583. At the most these plays could have alerted Marlowe to the dramatic possibilities in the Dido story.

The question of Marlowe's motivation for writing Dido presents many teasing ideas. Perhaps he was a young man intoxicated by the grandeur of the Latin classics and desired to equal them in his own tongue? Perhaps he was too much of a sensitive humanist to lose the opportunity of depicting a tale of grand human passions and actions? Much can be, and has been, said on both sides. There is sufficient internal evidence to support the view that Marlowe, inspired by national pride, was attempting classical drama in the vernacular. One remembers that Milton and Dryden were similarly inspired. There is also ample proof of the warm, pulsating, Renaissance spirit pervading the old Vergilian episodes.

The sixteenth century in England was an epoch where aspiring minds and souls were rediscovering the wealth of the classics and making it their own. The restricting religiosity of the Middle Ages was melting rapidly and the newer shackles of Puritan morality had not yet fully bound the English imagination. A new and fresh breath

of glorious freedom and brilliant achievement swept through Tudor England. By the 1580's Cambridge had begun to be known as the desemanating centre for the more sombre Reformation ideology and this was Marlowe's alma mater.

There was, too, the release in expression that all the classical writers offered; the products of a more sophisticated and adult society, there was nothing that they could not say. In post-Reformation society there was so much that could not be said, so much that was inhibited, not merely in the realm of belief and doctrine, but in the more important, the more real, the realm of the senses.⁷

And who knew this grand and inspiring world of the ancients better than the university men who had been nurtured on the classics from their very schooldays? Writing of that group of Tudor dramatists called "The University Wits" Bakeless notes that their study of the classics led to certain very pronounced virtues.

It meant that their work had a certain polish derived partly from the classics and partly from rhetorical training. It meant also that their work had elegance which had been lacking in most secular writing in the hundred and fifty years since Chaucer. It meant also that here were men who could write out of a wide intellectual background, not the 'riming motherwits' at whom Marlowe aims a barbed shaft in the opening lines of Tamberlane.⁸

It would not be necessary for one to expand upon the tremendous and far-reaching effects of the classical rediscovery that followed the fall of Constantinople in 1453.

One must note at the very outset that the rediscovery of the classics for the Tudors meant primarily the Latin writers. Roger Ascham might have tutored the future queen in Greek and Philip Sidney might have had a sound understanding of Plato, but the vast majority of literate Englishmen had to content themselves with Latin history, epic and lyric poetry and drama. It is difficult

7. Rowse, A.L. Christopher Marlowe. Macmillan and Co., London, 1964, p. 36.

8. Bakeless, J. Christopher Marlowe. Jonathan Cape, London, 1938, p. 104.

therefore to determine how much Greek Marlowe knew and how far he had read in that Literature. Since some Greek was essential for obtaining the Master's Degree it can be safely deduced that he could not have been entirely ignorant of that language. One must therefore be rather cautious of categorically stating that Dido represents Marlowe's efforts at writing classical drama on the Greek pattern, in English. Certainly he was very far from bringing Aristotle to bear fruit on English soil. On the other hand there can be little doubt that Milton in writing Samson Agonistes was certainly trying to do this.

Therefore the externals of classical drama are missing from Dido, the choric ode, the stylised declamatory speeches and the other idiosyncrasies of structure. However one does find certain broad features of classical drama in this treatment of tragedy and its causes. For the Renaissance humanist tragedy was seen in an entirely human frame of reference and human considerations were of paramount importance. The gods, Fate and Destiny, powerful though they might be, were relegated to a subordinate position and in the fullest sense man was the master and maker of his own life. Shakespeare very clearly and succinctly states this opinion and the other plays of Marlowe represent the same point of view. It is therefore significant that in this drama Marlowe repeatedly points out the divine hand behind human affairs. In fact Venus, Jupiter, Juno and Cupid are the master-puppeteers while Dido and Aeneas are attractive and talented marionettes.

The pointing to Fate and Destiny has a classical ring to it. Orestes, Antigone and others in Greek tragedy were all doomed creatures from the very start. Destiny had set them in motion along a one-way street without any turnings. One can only watch with pity

and terror as they struggle and eventually succumb to the inevitable. Macbeth or Hamlet are not predestined for their unhappy deaths in this sense. For the Greeks the gods were not only omnipresent but very changeable also, and thus the rewards of destiny became all the more hazardous and bitter.

Though they knew their gods had a part in every breeze that blew, in every vital force and in every human action, the nature of the divine participation in human affairs was unpredictable. There was cause for thanksgiving, as over a happy birth, a safe voyage, or a good harvest; but no one knew why at any moment happiness, or safety, or plenty might be denied. The ways of the gods were reflected in the precarious and uncertain conditions of existence. Though some gods behaved better than others towards men, the Greeks expected perfect justice from none of them.⁹

This is amply presented in this play. Venus is quarreling with Juno, the patroness of Carthage, and so Dido must suffer. Cupid in the shape of Ascanius causes pain and suffering to more than one. When all is going well, when Dido and Aeneas are about to rule happily for the good of all, at this moment Hermes appears to overthrow their plans for the prosperity of Carthage. There is no sound reason given for this, except that Rome must be founded by Aeneas in Italy. Dido bitterly questions the unaccountable change in her fortunes.

The gods, what gods, be those that seek my death?
Wherein have I offended Jupiter,
That he should take Aeneas from my arms?
O no, the gods weigh not what lovers do!¹⁰

Dido is totally unaware of how or when she managed to offend the gods. Nor does Dido proudly and boldly contest her cruel reward at the hands of Destiny. Marlowe depicts her pain in passionate poetry, but there is none of the challenging of Fate as one finds in Faustus.

9. Sewall, Richard B. The Vision of Tragedy. Yale University Press, 1959, p. 26.

10. Tucker Brooke ed. The Works of Christopher Marlowe. Clarendon Press, Oxford 1910, p. 434, ll. 1536-39.

She accepts readily her unhappy lot and parades her agony.

He does not turn the situation into one in which the single ego opposes the world, as he was later to do in his four great plays. He does not, for instance, bring out nearly the full possibilities for Dido's struggle against the destiny which snatches away Aeneas from her ... Instead he hardly makes Dido aware that it is the gods who are the ultimate cause of her suffering.¹¹

Suffering and misfortune are therefore presented in an obviously pre-Christian and non-Christian setting. They do not have the nobility that the Middle Ages gave them, nor do they have the purifying effect that later thinkers endowed them with. They are a part of the larger, inexplicable muddle called life - and man has to accept them as so.

Further the conclusion of the drama, though it ends with a lyrical and dramatic series of suicides, does not leave one depressed or nihilistically inclined. Again, like the Greek masters, something good and positive and, in the Platonic sense of the words, architectonic emerges. Milton has approximated to this final sense of forward-looking balance by closing his drama with the line -

Calm of mind all passions spent.

All the vitality and energy that has found expression in glorious declamation at the end is pointed towards a much worthier and greater target - the founding of Rome. A kind of balance is restored because all this agony and frustration, this betrayal and remorse has a noble reward - the Mistress of the Seven Hills.

The energy has at least an outlet: Aeneas goes to Italy to 'raise a new foundation to old Troy' and Dido dies energetically, piling on the wood, stage-managing the whole affair.¹²

11. Kocher, P. Christopher Marlowe. Russell and Russell Inc., N.Y. 1962, p. 301.

12. Steane, J.B. Marlowe. Cambridge University Press, 1964, p. 49.

Bootless I saw it was to war with fate.¹⁶

That Aeneas himself is aware of his destiny is amply proved by lines

Carthage, my friendly host adieu,
Since destiny doth call me from the shore;
Hermes this night descending in a dream,
Hath summoned me to fruitful Italy:
Jove wills it so, my mother wills it so.¹⁷

In a later scene Aeneas confesses

How loth I am to leave these Libian bounds,
But that eternal Jupiter commands.¹⁸

And again he says:

I am commanded by immortal Jove,
To leave this town and pass to Italy,
And therefore must of force.¹⁹

Lastly Marlowe's depiction of the gods - Jove, Juno, Cupid, Venus and Hermes conforms to the Grecian concept about divinity and its relation to men

For the gods of Greece were beings essentially like man, superior to him not in spiritual nor even in moral attributes, but in outward gifts, such as strength, beauty and immortality. And as a consequence of this relation to them were not inward or spiritual, but external and mechanical. In the midst of a crowd of dieties, capricious and conflicting in their wills, he had to find his way as best he could. There was no knowing precisely what a god might want; there was no knowing what he might be going to do... Altogether it was a difficult thing to ascertain or to move the will of the gods, and one must help oneself as best one could.²⁰

This capriciousness of the gods is brilliantly brought out in the opening scene between Jupiter and Ganymede. Though this has no direct bearing on the story of Dido or Aeneas, and is based entirely on half a line in the Aeneid, this induction scene strikes one of the most important key-notes in the play. The gay, fun-loving gods

16. Tucker Brooke ed. The Works of Christopher Marlowe. p. 415, l. 859.

17. Ibid., p. 423. l. 1151-55.

18. Ibid., p. 432. l. 1489-90.

19. Ibid., p. 433. l. 1507-09.

20. Dickinson, G.L. The Greek View of Life. Methuen & Co. London, 1953, p. 17.

who care little for human joy or sorrow are the real figure in the play- Dido and Aeneas being only pretty toys for immortal hands. Ganymede vows that he shall "bring the gods to wonder at the same".²¹

Jupiter has apparently neglected the fortunes of Aeneas and for this Venus scolds him and complains against Juno, who together with Aeolus is troubling Aeneas

She(Juno) humbly did beseech him(Aeolus) for our bane
And charg'd him drown my son with all his train.²²

Whereupon, for no good reason, Jupiter promises to rectify the situation and calls Ganymede to help him.

Venus farewell, thy son shall be our care:
Come Ganymede, we must set about this gear.²³

"Gear" in Elizabethan times was a word denoting an amusing entertainment and that is what supposedly the love of Dido and Aeneas was for the gods. One finds an undertone of Hardy-esque irony in this representation of the waywardness of the gods.

Some critics have explained the opening scene in autobiographical terms. They feel that Marlowe's own perversion found expression in the dalliance of Jupiter with Ganymede. This certainly is absent in Vergil

Other Elizabethan poems were erotic enough, But Marlowe's work has also a homosexuality which sets it apart...it occurs also in the friendship between Edward and Gaveston, and the Jupiter-Ganymede scene in Dido, and when Baines attributes to Marlowe the statement "that all they that love not Tobacco and Boies were fools", we are forced to take the matter seriously... At the very least, its treatment in three of Marlowe's works shows his willingness to tamper with a dangerous topic, and more probably it betokens some degree of personal passion.²⁴

However inspite of these clearly classical indications one cannot call Dido a classical drama. The Renaissance secularist was

21. Tucker Brooke ed. The Works of Marlowe. Clarendon Press, Oxford. 1910, p. 393.1.18.

22. Ibid., p. 394.1.60-61.

23. Ibid., p. 396.1.120-1.

24. Kocher, P. Christopher Marlowe. Russell and Russell Inc., N.Y. 1962. p. 209.

too strong in Marlowe to submit to classical fatalism and one finds that even though this may a poor play theatrically it is nevertheless a magnificent piece of literary work.

That Marlowe was very much aware of the human considerations is seen by the careful parallels that he consistently draws between the human and divine worlds. It appears as though he was at times uncertain as to which side his sympathies lay and who were the prime factors in his drama- men or gods. Jupiter fondles the boy Ganymede; Dido is irresistably attracted towards Cupid-Ascanius: Venus and Dido are both mothers, Venus in actuality and Dido by virtue of adopting Ascanius; Venus and Juno are rivals for Jupiter's favour, and Anna and Dido are rivals for Iarbus' love. This constant linking and interweaving of the action shows that at both levels the same forces and relationships are to be found. Marlowe changes Vergil to bring in yet another parallel. He shows Aeneas as a man who has always abandoned women - first in Troy and therefore again in Carthage.

We saw Cassandra sprawling in the streets,
* * * * *
Whom I took up to bear unto our ships:
But suddenly the Grecians followed us
And I alas, was forced to let her lie.²⁵

Vergil does not show his hero in such a poor light. He has Aeneas visited by the spirit of his wife, Creusa, who urges him to forget her and move on towards Rome.

These happenings are part of the divine
Purpose. It was not written that you should bring Creusa
Away with you: the great ruler of heaven does not allow it.²⁶

Thus one finds Marlowe succumbing to the spell of Vergil, but making a new story of it. He does not studiously follow every line of

25. Tucker Brooke ed. The Works of Christopher Marlowe. Clarendon Press, Oxford. 1910, p. 407.l.569-74.

26. Aeneid p. 58.l.777-79.

the Vergilian pattern, but draws his inspiration from classical sources to breathe forth newer romantic creations. Vaughan has noted how the classics brought something new to England and how they helped create something new

Here is something utterly different from anything we have seen before; here is a new fountain of thought and feeling opened for us to draw from; here is new perfection of imaginative form such as we never had conceived possible. Such was the spell that classical literature cast upon the generation immediately followed the revival of learning, the spell which held Europe bound for at least a century and a half.²⁷

The most significant Elizabethan aspect of this drama is the wealth of rich, passionate lyricism that is found not only in the blank verse, but in the entire atmosphere of the drama. This was a symbol of that vitality and exuberance of body and mind that characterised the age.

The dominant man of the age was a charge of energy released from old dogmas and inhibitions and not yet bound to new, boundless in ambition, longing to develop his capacities, unshackled in humour, sensitive to literature if it breathed life, given to violence of action and speech, and struggling, amid his bombast, vices and cruelties, to be a gentleman.²⁸

There are numerous passages where the blank verse leaps from apt prettiness to sublimity. A few examples will suffice to indicate the Elizabethan love for the sonorous, the vividly dramatic and the lyrically moving. An example is Aeneas' description of the sack of Troy.

Then he unlock'd the horse, and suddenly
From out his entrails, Neoptolemus
Setting his spear upon the ground, leapt forward,
And after him a thousand Grecians more,
In whose stern faces shin'd the quenchless fire
That after burnt the pride of Asia.²⁹

27. Vaughan, C.E. Types of Tragic Drama. Macmillan & Co., London. 1908. p. 74.

28. Durant, W. The Age of Reason Begins. Simon and Schuster, N.Y. 1961. p. 63.

29. Tucker Brooke ed. The Works of Christopher Marlowe. p.405.1.477.82

The description of Phyrus murdering hordes is surrealistically brief.

And after him his band of Mirmidons,
With balls of wild fire in their murdering paws.³⁰

The most memorable and haunting passages are the outbursts of the abandoned Dido who grows in poetic stature as her situation becomes more desperate. There is the moving address to the shipping tackle and gear of Aeneas which Dido keeps secure in her rooms, and the hysterical vigour of lines such as

Why star'st thou in my face? if thou wilt stay
Leap in mine arms, mine arms are open wide:
If not, turn from me, and I'll turn from thee:
For thou thou hast the power to say farewell,
I have not the power to stay thee.³¹

There are numerous stirring lines which stand second to none in all of Elizabethan drama, and that these had a lasting effect on Marlowe's younger contemporary, Shakespeare, cannot be questioned.

Another notable contemporary attitude reflected in this play is the political frame of reference.

Dido says that she not only owns all the lands and moveables of her subjects but also disposes of their lives absolutely. She has the right to execute who even questions her command. Her will is supreme law. Clearly this is the ultimate in despotic theory.³²

This brings Dido in line with Marlowe's own queen. Tudor absolutism was one of the most complete and finished products of sixteenth century England. It is as though Queen Elizabeth herself is speaking in lines as

Those that dislike what Dido gives in charge
Command my guard to slay for their offence:
Shall vulgar peasants storm at what I do?
The ground is mine that gives them sustenance,
The air wherein they breathe, the water, fire,
All that they have, their lands, their goods, their lives,
And I the goddess of all these, command
Aeneas ride as Carthaginian king.³³

30. Ibid. p. 406.1.511-12.

31. Ibid. p. 435.1.1587-1591.

32. Kocher, P. Christopher Marlowe. Russell & Russell Inc, N.Y. 1962. p. 176

33. Tucker Brooke ed. The Works of Christopher Marlowe. p. 426-7.1.1277-1284.

This absolutism was contrary to both Greek and Roman states who exhibited a large share of democracy and whose ruler was the first among equals. This concept was popular till medieval times. Dido's speeches were specially dear to a Renaissance audience as they felt very much akin to these heroes of old and wished to recreate the adventures of the past in their own times. The comparatively new spirit of nationalism engendered by Renaissance humanism and secularism made each man feel that he was individually, and his nation was as a whole, striving to approximate to the great ideals revealed by the rediscovery of the classics.

..... the underlying vision that haunted the European imagination. Each western capital considered itself, like Carthage, "a statelier Troy"(1410); every beauty could claim to be, like Dido, "a second Helen" (1552).³⁴

The character of Dido and the nature of her tragedy are deeply imbued with the Renaissance spirit. Dido is not the regal, imperious heroine of Sophocles, but almost schoolgirlish in her passionate infatuation.

It is true that Dido in this play is not so much a woman as a debutante. She makes love like an adolescent, and she curries her beloved's favour by loading him with gifts and honours. This is how one wins lovers in a school-girl's dream.³⁵

Dido's attitudes and impulsive gestures show her to be more akin to Juliet than to Antigone. The wild and total surrender to an emotional impulse is very much a fruit of the Renaissance.

This can be seen all the more clearly when one contrasts the Vergilian original with Marlowe's drama. In his delineation of the character of Aeneas, Marlowe throws over the central epic figure of

34. Levin, H. The Overreacher. Beacon Press, Boston. 1964. p. 15.

35. Allen, Don Cameron. "Marlowe's Dido and the Tradition" in Essays on Shakespearean and Elizabethan Drama. ed. Richard - Hosley. Routledge and Kegan Paul, London. 1963. p. 65.

Vergil a colouring of romantic adventure.

Marlowe's nature led him to make still further changes, which amusingly demonstrate the difference between the classical restraint of an Augustan like Vergil and the romanticism of an Elizabethan. Vergil's hero is always 'pious Aeneas'; Marlowe uses the adjective just once; his Trojan is an Elizabethan adventure, a little like Drake and a great deal more like Raleigh. Vergil's Aeneas leads a band of warriors against the Greeks; Marlowe's Aeneas attacks them all alone.... Vergil describes the building of Carthage by the Carthaginians; Marlowe's hero builds the city himself. The changes are typical of the poet and only a little less typical of the age.³⁶

Marlowe, steeped in Cambridge humanism infuses the same into the character of his chief protagonists. Further, as has already been pointed out, he concentrates on the human agony and passion more than on the divine motivation for it. It is more a tale of star-crossed lovers than a tale of semi-divine figures, more a sad story of love and betrayal than of the founder of Rome fulfilling his appointed destiny.

A common, though poignant, story of the conflict between love and the instinct for action when these two are brought sharply into contrast in the mind of one man.³⁷

This clash of duty with desire, though not unknown in Hellenic drama, was more developed and important in the Renaissance theatre than ever before. Particularly this clash in the mind of a man of action. Achates chides Aeneas with dallying too long in Carthage.

Banish that ticing dame from forth your mouth,
And follow your foreseeing stars in all;
This is no life for men at arms to live,
Where dalliance doth consume a soldier's strength,
And wanton motions of alluring eyes
Effeminate our minds inur'd to war.³⁸

36. Bakeless, J. Christopher Marlowe. Jonathan Cape, London. 1938. p. 258.

37. Ellis-Fermor, U. Christopher Marlowe. Methuen and Co., London. 1927. p. 19.

38. Tucker Brooke ed. The Works of Christopher Marlowe. Clarendon Press, London. 1910. p. 424. l. 1181-86.

Aeneas is badgered into confessing -

Each word she says will then contain a crown,
And every speech be ended with a kiss:
I may not 'dure tis female drudgery,
To sea Aeneas, find out Italy.³⁹

This conflict between love and duty was one that made a special appeal to the Elizabethans. On the one hand bold adventurers were not wanting, and on the other, the hand of the highest in the land was yet unclaimed. More than one aspired and failed - Essex lost his head, Leicester and Raleigh were forced into inconvenient marriages. The narrow path between love and duty could be trod by only the bravest and shrewdest of men. Marlowe, it is suggested, has alluded obliquely to this danger in this play knowing that he was touching on a theme that was very much a part of his times.

His(Aeneas) choice, however, is between her kisses and another crown. Wavering- like Shakespeare's Antony- between Africa and Italy, between the enticements of love and the duties of war, he allows the gods to solve his dilemma for him. Venus is in the ascendant but Mars must have his day.⁴⁰

Some critics are of the opinion that because of the confused welter of thought and feeling in this drama it is not really a tragedy. There is no working out of a tragic destiny, nor is there any truly heroic figure.

What Marlowe had in him here was the energy to experience keenly a variety of sensations - of wonder and ecstasy as well as pain and horror. But for all the gorgeous panoply of power, relished in this play as in Tamperlane, there is no real sense of dignity in life or the possibility of a tragic dignity in the loss of it.⁴¹

It is more of a romance such as adolescence loves, painted in passionate and glowing terms. There is only one hint in the entire text that the lovers, Dido in particular, have so lost themselves in their

39. Ibid. p. 424.1.1202-05.

40. Levin, H. The Overreacher. Beacon Press, Boston. 1964. p. 17.

41. Steane, J.B. Marlowe. Cambridge University Press. 1964. p. 49-50.

attachment that they might call down upon themselves the anger of the gods for going to such extremes.

O that the clouds were here wherein thou fleest,
That thou and I unseen might sport ourselves:
That Heaven envious of our joys is waxen pale,
And when we whisper, then the stars fall down,
To be partakers of our honey talk.⁴²

That this play made a lasting impression on the Elizabethan public is proved by the many references, allusions and quotations to it and from it in the works of Marlowe's contemporaries, specially Shakespeare. The description of Cleopatra's barge on the Cydnus owes something to Dido's speech

I'll give thee tackling made of rivelled gold,
Wound on the barks of odoriferous trees,
Oars of massy ivory full of holes
Through which the water shall delight to play;
Thy anchors shall be hewed from crystal rocks,
Which, if thou loose them, shall shine above the waves;
Thy masts whereon thy swelling sails shall hang
Hollow pyramids of silver plate,
The sails of folded lawn, where shall be wrought
The wars of Troy, but not Troy's overthrow.⁴³

The burlesque speech of the player in Hamlet makes open reference to Marlowe's earlier play and the story of the fall of Troy. Steane finds more than one allusion and parallel between Dido and Shakespeare's Tempest, aside the many clear influences in Antony and Cleopatra.

There are lines in this play at which Shakespeare may well have smiled.⁴⁴

In summing up one finds oneself struggling to compromise two opposing forces - classical drama and Renaissance romance. Perhaps the answer lies in the fact the Marlowe also found it impossible

42. Tucker Brooke ed. The Works of Christopher Marlowe. Clarendon Press, Oxford. 1910. p. 426.1.1256-1260.

43. Ibid., p. 412.1.750-59.

44. Steane, J.B. Marlowe. Cambridge University Press. 1964. p. 389.

to reconcile these two. Since this play is one of his earliest, perhaps first sketched while he was yet at Cambridge, the influence of the classics and English translations of them, was very marked. Marlowe might very well have been inspired to contribute to the stream of English "classical" writing. But the Renaissance was too powerful within him - the individualism, the impatience with restrictions, the thirst for romance and a life pulsating with sensations - and so we have both streams uneasily yoked together in Dido.

CHAPTER V

TAMBERLANE

The title page of Tamberlane the Great in it's first edition bears the date 1590. This date is very significant as it throws into focus the whole intellectual and social background of the age. In the decade that preceeded Marlowe's dramatic success four permanent theatres had been established just outside the borough limits of the city of London. These were in addition to the many inn-yards which were intermittently used for the production of plays, the private theatres at court and the homes of the nobility. All this indicates the growing popularity of the drama and an accelerating rise in the number of theatre-lovers. Some scholars go so far as to claim that never before or after the Elizabethan Age has drama in England been so prolific or so popular.

In the decade before Marlowe's Tamberlane burst upon the drama, four theatres were built: the Theatre and the curtain by the Burbages, one at Newington Butts, and then the Rose, built by Henslowe. These were in the suburbs outside the city, the first two to the north in Shoreditch and Moorfields, just outside Bishopsgate, the second by or near Bankside on the south bank of the Thames near Southwark".¹

The years that preceeded the production of this momentous play were very thrilling and eventful ones for England. The old animosity with Spain broke out into open hostilities in 1585 when England sent an army to help the Dutch in their fight for independence from Spain. One of the prominent figures in this army was Sir Philip Sidney who

1. Rowse, A.L. Christopher Marlowe Macmillan & Co., London.1964. p.52.

met his death on the battlefield of Zutphen in September 1586. The English sea-dogs had made several raids on the Spanish Main and many a Spanish galleon had been sunk or captured. Sir Richard Grenville and the Admiral, Lord Howard, were extremely popular figures in England for their daring exploits. England was agog with feverish activity in the imminent expectation of a Spanish invasion. In 1587 Francis Drake boldly raided Cadiz harbour and 'singd the King of Spain's beard' by destroying a good part of the Armada which was preparing itself to invade England. The religious unrest within the country-- the young and militant Anglican Church, the dour, sombre Puritans and the dissatisfied and suspect Roman Catholics were 'seething in a welter of mistrust and controversy -- heightened patriotic sentiment.

At the same time English explorers and navigators were breaking fresh ground in their search for North-west and North-East Passages to India and China. Starting with John Cabot who explored Labrador under a patent from Henry VII there had been a whole galaxy of distinguished explorers --- Martin Frobisher and Henry Hudson in North America, Hawkins and Drake in the West Indies, Humphrey Gilbert in Scandnavia, Raleigh in Virginia and numerous other lesser figures who explored the west coast of Africa. Richard Hakluyt decided to immortalise these brave souls by compiling their diaries and navigation reports. Hakluyt's publications -- the first folio edition of 1589 -- awakened the English navigation to the romance of the sea and the glory of national adventure. This is one of the fundamental elements in the English ethos and finds one of its finest expressions in Tennyson's "Ulysees". The commercial aspects of these voyages was not ignored either -- the Muscovy Company was granted a Royal Charter to enter into trade with Russia and the Scandnavian

countries, while the Levant Company was established for trade with the Middle East and the Ottoman Empire. Within ten years of the first performance of Tamberlane the most powerful and successful of all trading companies--- The East India Company, was granted a royal charter.

The English imagination fired by the Renaissance, spurred on by the feats of patriotic explorers and navigators, intoxicated by dreams of national aggrandisement and economic prosperity was ready for a gifted man of letters to give it expression in the theatre -- and that man was Christopher Marlowe. Fresh from Cambridge, inspired by the magic of the theatre and with inimitable ambition as a guide, Marlowe's genius answered the challenge of the hour.

It was at this moment of heightened tension that Elizabethan drama, as we recognise it, was born. All the conditions for it were in existence, all that was wanting was that a poet of genius should come forward, blow the breath of inspiration into it and start the conflagration. This was what Marlowe did.²

The young Marlowe came to London with rather the same spirit and aspiring hopes as those of Dick Whittington. It seems clear that he had rejected all claims of the church. A student of King's School, Canterbury and a Parker scholar at Cambridge was normally expected to take holy orders. Marlowe's natural inclinations led him to a far too independent turn of mind to be limited by the 39 Articles of Faith. Further, if we credit the assumption that he had been employed by Walsingham as an under-cover agent while yet a student, one may easily understand Marlowe's rejection of the Church. The Military and legal professions were equally out of question. So like many another gifted university alumna, Marlowe decided to earn his

2. Ibid. p. 52.

living by his pen -- a rather hazardous task in Tudor England. This group of literati found the theatre and its sensation -- hungry patrons the finest and most lucrative source of income. John Lyly was perhaps the most famous amongst these pioneers in the field of professional writers who were later grouped together under the appellation of - University Wits. Lyly enjoyed an enviable reputation at the royal court, but Robert Greene, Thomas Nashe, Gabriel Harvey, Thomas Kyd (a graduate of Merchant Taylor's School) were amongst the many others who wrote prolifically for the Elizabethan commoner.

After Lyly there came suddenly a whole group of university graduates, some to become poets and live in obscure dependence on noblemen and gentry who were at once friends and patrons, others to plunge into that wild variety of hack-work by which the professional Elizabethan man-of-letters made his scanty living-plays, verse and those 'scald, trivial, lying pamphlets which were sold for six-pence around St Paul's.. This was the first group of that professional, university trained literary men that London had ever known. As such, they were promptly dubbed 'University Wits', and by that name the group has come down the ages.³

Sources : It is extremely difficult to pin point the sources for this play, but one fact is abundantly clear -- the story of Tamberlane was one which was extremely popular and fascinating for the ambitious temper of sixteenth century Europe. Evidence of this is to be found in the many references to Tamberlane in German, French and Italian books of the time to say nothing of full Biographies.

3. Bakeless, J. Christopher Marlowe. Jonathan Cape, London. 1938, p. 103.

In English most notably there was Whetstone's "English Mirror" 1586.

"The name, the story, the spell of such supreme power much impressed the West during the Renaissance, and there were various works that transmitted the saga".⁴

Various scholars have laboriously compiled lists of books which Marlowe might have consulted. Prof. Rowse lists the Cosmographie Universelle of Andre Thevet as the source for the portends that presage the death of Tamberlane. Another book mentioned by Rowse is Sebastian Munster's "Cosmography" - the best encyclopedia of the age which Marlowe might have read in the French version by Belleforest.

It seems he followed up the bibliography given by Pedro Mexia and a number of these works were already in the library at Corpus: the Turkish history of Paulus Jovius, Baptista Ignatius' book on the origin of the Turks, Pius II's description of Asia and Europe and a book by Fulgotius with it's account of the way Tamberlane won over the Persian Theridamus ... To these we should probably add Perondinus and Lomicerus' Chronicle of the Turks.⁵

Professor Poirier adds to the above list the accounts of Aeneas Sylvius, Piccolonini and Orlando Furioso by Ariosto from which the Olympia episode is taken. The great atlas of Ortelius was another mainstay for Marlowe. Prof. Kocher has noted the military manuals consulted by Marlowe, specially in Tamberlane Part II. Amongst others, the most notable are Frontinus' Strategema, a Roman treatise much read in the Renaissance and Paul 'Ives' Practice of Fortification. From this latter a whole section was incorporated into the text --

4. Rowse, A.L. Christopher Marlowe. Macmillan & Co. London.1964.p.56.
5. Ibid., p. 57.

Tamberlane Part II 3. ii. 11- 53-82.

But what most probably fired Marlowe's interest to begin with was Whetstone's English Mirror, 1586. Here the dramatic rise from rags to riches, from Sythian shepherd to world conqueror was told in glowing terms. Perhaps the lowly origins and lofty ambitions of Tamberlane paralleled the desires and conditions of the poet so aptly that he eagerly took up the theme. Was there something in the story so very powerful and compelling? Was there something particularly apt for the Elizabethan mind in the tale of a mighty and merciless empire-builder? Most scholars feel that the clue to Marlowe's fascination with the Tamberlane story is to be found in the ubiquitous autobiographical strain in the drama. Marlowe like Tamberlane rose from lowly origins. Whetstone had said of Tamberlane-- "notwithstanding the poverty of his parents, even from his infancy he had a reaching and imaginative mind, the strength and comeliness of his body answered the haughtiness of his heart."⁶ We can well imagine the effect of these lines on the Canterbury shoe-maker's son.

The pride of Tamberlane and unlimited confidence in his powers and capabilities was shared by Marlowe to a large extent. It appears that he was a head strong youth who held fast to his unorthodox views. The Baines note, which reads as rather silly nonsense to the twentieth century reader, nonetheless indicates that Marlowe was no follower of the crowd. The opinions of Greene and Nash regarding their fellow dramatist again emphasise the bold independence of Marlowe. The title page of Tamberlane Part I reads "who from a Sythian shepherd, by his rare and wonderful conquests became a most puissant and mighty monarch".

6. Whetstone, G. English Mirror quoted by F.P. Wilson in Marlowe & the early Shakespeare. Clarendon Press, 1953, p. 23.

A young man of humble birth, who had already done some service to the state, who knew that to make his way in the world in which he lived he must be both "a great doer and a great speaker", could have found no more congenial subject for the first fruits of his genius than this greatest example in the modern world of the successful conqueror, the men of action whose eloquence is a part of his success as a man of action.⁷

History

When one comes to an examination of history and historical interpretation in this drama there is a wealth of detail, quite often confusing and contradictory, that confronts one. Historiography and the history of ideas is a science that has come into prominence in the last hundred years, and one has always to be on one's guard against pitting twentieth century notions against Elizabethan ways and ideas. Early historians wrote either to glorify their own cities and nations or else to present a concise theological argument. Thus in examining Tamberlane it would perhaps be easier to first examine the "facts of history" -- viz. events, happenings, wars, conquests etc. and then to examine the ideologies and philosophies behind the interpretation and dramatic representation of the "facts". For it cannot be forgotten that no matter how crude and unsophisticated the Elizabethan mind might appear as judged by contemporary standards, the dramatic artist always has an unified picture to present and both the actual happenings and the ideas behind them contribute to make up the artistic whole.

The most conspicuous sources for the facts used by Marlowe for

7. Rowse, A.L. Christopher Marlowe. Macmillan & Co., London. 1964, pp. 57-58.

this drama are George Whetstone's English Mirror 1586, Fortescue's translation of Pedro Mexia's Silva de Varia lecion, 1571 and probably Thomas Newton's Notable History of the Saracens 1575.

Whetstone presents a not unsympathetic account of Tamberlane and noted:-

"In his army was never found mutiny. He was wise, liberal and rewarded every soldier with his desert. There is no remembrance of a greater army than this".⁸

Marlowe makes many references to the military might of Tamberlane.

Three hundred thousand men in armour clad,
Upon their prancing steeds, disdainfully
With wanton paces trampling on the ground.
Five hundred thousand footmen threatening shot
Shaking their swords, their spears and iron bills
Environing their standard round, that stood
As bristle pointed as a thorny wood
Their war-like engines and munition
Exceed the forces of their martial men.⁹

Whetstone further analysed Tamberlane's character and wrote

And in truth Tamberlane, although he was endued
with many excellencies and virtues, yet it seemed by his
cruelty that God raised him to chasten kings and proud
people of this earth.¹⁰

Consciousness of his divine destiny and share in the plans of providence is only too evident from Tamberlane's own words.

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8. Wilson F.P. "Marlowe & the Early Shakespeare". Clarendon Press, Oxon 1953 quoted p. 21.
9. Tucker Brooke. ed. The Works of Christopher Marlowe. Clarendon Press, Oxon, 1910, p. 46. 11. 1393-1401.
10. Wilson F.P. Marlowe & the Early Shakespeare. Clarendon Press, 1958, quoted. p. 22.

I that am termed the Scourge and Wrath of God,
The only fear and terror of the world.¹¹

The historical facts that Marlowe read and made use of in his drama were those pertaining to Tamberlane's political and military successes --- his meteoric rise to power, the numerous kingdoms that fell to him, the invincible might of his army and the glories of his empire. The more unpleasant aspects of conquest and the darker side of Tamberlane's nature were either unknown or ignored by Marlowe as having no reference to his drama of political grandeur.

Tamberlane is without inner dramatic conflict;
its conflicts are external and extrovert.¹²

Further Marlowe very adroitly wrote so as to strike all those chords most sympathetic to his audience. It would not be strictly true to affirm that he was one of those closet play-wrights who consumed their genius in the white heat of isolated inspiration. Marlowe might not have known the theatre nor understood its mechanics as intimately as Shakespeare, but he certainly could calculate his main design so as to capture audience-interest to the fullest. Hence the emphasis on scenes of war and battle, military preparedness, the luxury of an oriental court, the pageantry of empire building all centred-as Renaissance England was -- in one imperious figure.

"Tamberlane conforms to the heroic drama in that it presents a heroic figure in an episodic series of events to gratify an audience's intrinsic love of such figures".¹³

After a perceptive reading of the text it will be only too clear that a mere historical narration or eventful pageant was not

11. Tucker Brooke ed. The Works of Christopher Marlowe. Clarendon Press, 1910. p. 39. ll 1142-43

12. Rowse, A.L. Christopher Marlowe. Macmillan & Co., London 1964, p. 67.

13. Ribner, I. The English History Play in the Age of Shakespeare. Princeton University Press, Princeton, N.Y. 1957, pp. 64-65.

Marlowe's dramatic intention. Even the Biblical stories presented in the Mystery cycles were more than a mere presentation of fact, though probably that was their main intention.

Deeper implications are unavoidable when a genius such as Marlowe was wielding the pen, and in searching for these one comes upon certain very illuminating data. For instance one of the more significant conclusions is that Marlowe had a more sound and sensitive understanding of historiography than most persons would suppose. The subtle shifts in emphasis away from Augustinian theology and the gradual development of democratic humanism of the type of Erasmus and More was perceived and appreciated by Marlowe to a much greater extent than by most of his contemporaries. Even Shakespeare is more inclined to maintain the hierarchial social status quo and profess blind obedience to the Lord's anointed king than is Marlowe.

To begin with Tamberlane is the first clear treatment of a historical figure in all English drama. Leaving aside early church drama which presented figures such as Adam and Noah having as much historical validity as Pilate and Pharoah, there had been few attempts at presenting the workings of Civitas Terrena. The authors of Kynge John and Gorbudoc had made fumbling attempts in this direction but never before had there been the level of sublimity or sense of theatre as one finds in Marlowe's maiden effort.

Further, the historical sources for this drama are all classical, that is, non-christian. Thus Marlowe chooses to ignore St Augustine and St Thomas Aquinas and rather chooses to follow Aristotle. The former stressed the eternal and divine angle when discussing the affairs of men. Aristotle stated that history should eschew ethics and stick to politics. The two most popular historians in Renaissance England were Hall and Holinshed. Another well read figure was Bishop

Stubbs, and Shakespeare it will be remembered relied heavily on the above writers for his dramatic material. These are the stereotypes of the Christian historians tracing the hand of God in every event. Marlowe's model is Polybius who was first translated into English by Christopher Watson 1565.

Many classical and pre-christian ideas were carried over into, and eagerly adopted by the Renaissance. In attempting therefore to distinguish the contemporary from ancient in Elizabethan writing is difficult and many of the ideas are the same with some few slight modifications.

Humanism is the keynote of classical culture as it is of Marlowe's writings, in both verse and drama. This spirit of classical history has been described by Prof. Collingwood thus.

It is a narrative of human history, the history of man's deeds, man's purposes, man's successes and failures. It admits, no doubt, a divine agency, but the function of this agency is strictly limited. The will of the gods as manifested in history only appears rarely; in the best historians hardly at all, and then only as a will supporting and seconding the will of man and enabling him to succeed where otherwise he would have failed... The philosophical idea underlying it is the idea of the human will as freely choosing its own ends and limited in the success it achieves in their pursuit only by its own force and by the power of the intellect which apprehends them and works out means to their achievement. This implies that whatever happens in history happens as a direct result of human will.¹⁴

14. Collingwood, R.G. The Idea of History. Clarendon Press, Oxford 1946, pp. 41-42.

This is in direct opposition to Jehovah drowning the host of Pharoah in the Red Sea or smiting the Assyrian host besieging Jerusalem. Christian historians further did not confine themselves to particular nations or empires but took up the fortunes of all humanity as their field, since they were essentially concerned with the salvation of mankind. An excellent example of this kind of historian is Eusebius of Caesarea writing his Praeparatio Evangelica in the late third century A.D. in which he takes up the story of all the pre-christian empires and culminates his work with the Incarnation.

The Renaissance writer following classical models by-passes the divine element in human history.

Tamberlane is treated as the new Renaissance prince, who by his own ability and without regard for any supernatural power could conquer the world and re-vitalise empires.¹⁵

However Marlowe made it abundantly clear to his audience that they were watching an action that was non-christian if not, pre-Christian. In this way, no matter how contemporary the drama was in other respects, Marlowe created a non-contemporary frame of reference. To depict non-Elizabethan England Marlowe resorted to certain devices, other than the obvious unfamiliar, Oriental names.

First of all there is the clear denial of Providence having any part in human affairs. The Bible had stated

Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall to the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows.¹⁶

Marlowe boldly makes man the maker and master of his own destiny. Tamberlane is not the victim but the controller of Fortune's wheel.

15. Ibid. p. 63.

16. St. Matthew. Ch.10.v.29-31.

I hold the Fates bound fast in iron chains,
And with my hand turn Fortune's wheel about,
And sooner shall the sun fall from his sphere
Than Tamberlane be slain or overcome.¹⁷

Marlowe boldly writes in opposition to Tudor political principles.

It is not God who makes kings, says Marlowe in defiance
of the entire body of Tudor political doctrine; it is
fortune and human will.¹⁸

History was created by human will and a firm grasp of Fortune.
The latter was not the Christian Fortune by which over-proud Man was
chastened by his Maker. Fortune was rather the capricious goddess of
classical times which mocked the faint hearted but favoured the
ambitious and adventurous soul. It was this fortune that led Theseus
to his conquest of the Minotaur and Jason to the Golden Fleece.

Marlowe's audience however, were schooled in the Christian
pattern of thought. For them the heaviest reward of Original Sin
had been the perpetual clouding of human reason. This made all human
action impulsive and blind and incapable of achieving noble ends.
Only with the aid of divine Grace could man achieve any success.

The wisdom displayed in man's actions is never his own
wisdom; it is that of God.¹⁹

Total dependence of Divine Grace and help was repeatedly expounded
by Christendom.

The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong,
neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of
understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill; but time and
chance happeneth to them all.²⁰

The New Testament is even more explicit in the matter.

There is but one law-giver, who is able to save and to
destroy; who art thou that thou judgest another? Go to now,

17. Brooke, T. ed. The Works of Christopher Marlowe. Clarendon Press,
Oxford. 1910. p.18,1.369-372.

18. Ribner, I. "The Idea of History in Marlowe's Tamberlane". in
Journal of English Literary History. vol.xx.Dec. 1953. p.86.

19. Ibid., p. 83.

20. Ecclesiastes. ch. 9.v.11.

Kaufmann

ye that say, Today or tomorrow we will go into such a city,
and continue there a year, and buy and sell; whereas ye
know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life?
It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and
then vanisheth away.²¹

The prayers in the 1611 Prayer Book constantly repeat the need
for human gratitude for each day of healthful human activity.

Marlowe on the contrary is staunchly humanistic and this spirit
is infused into Tamberlane. The classical historians - Caesar,
Thucydides, Polybius- had made man the measure of all things.

Rarely in classical history is there any indication that histor-
ical events may be the product of anything other than human action
based upon human will in a world ruled by fortune, a female and
fickle fortune whom the hero of history can master and bend to his
will.²²

Tamberlane is not king because of the gods favour, but rather
inspite of it.

Though Mars himself the angry god of arms
And all the earthly potentates conspire,
To disposess me of this diadem:
Yet will I wear it in despite of them.²³

Tamberlane is no humble mortal, tiny and ineffectual, but he is a
superman conscious of his abundant prowess and equal to the gods.

Usum: To be a king, is to be half a god

Tamb. A god is not so glorious as a king:

I think the pleasure they enjoy in heaven

Cannot compare with kingly joys in earth.²⁴

When Zenocrate weeps at the conquest and destruction of her father's
dominions Tamberlane imperiously refuses any quarter.

21. James. ch. 4.v.12-14.

22. Ribner, I. "The Idea of History in Marlowe's Tamberlane". Journal
of English Literary History. vol. XX Dec. 1953, p. 83.

23. Tucker Brooke ed. The Works of Christopher Marlowe. Clarendon Press,
Oxon 1910. p. 33. ll. 909-12.

24. Ibid., p. 29. ll 761-764.

Zenocrate, were Egypt Jove's own land,

Yet would I with my sword make Jove to stoop.²⁵

Theridamas hails him as "Arch-monarch of the World"²⁶ and Techelles calls him "our earthly god".²⁷

Tamberlane's megalomania reaches its zenith in his boast

"Sickness or death can never conquer me."²⁸

All this amply indicated to Marlowe's spectators that they were watching a non-christian monarch in a non-christian setting. Even the greatest figures in the history of Christendom-- Charlemagne, King Henry V and Henry IV of Austria had never dared to express themselves so self-confidently. Modern critics have equated this spirit with the spirit of Renaissance humanism which was sweeping Western Europe during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. At Cambridge and in London Marlowe had been at the centre of English humanism and there can be little doubt that he fully endorsed its tenets.

A second feature of medieval and non-christian historiography as pointed out by R.C. Collingwood is the concept of substantialism. Briefly, this means that only the unchanging can be known because it is fixed. The matter of history is transitory and changing--acts which come into being, develop and then terminate. Hence passing events are of little or no importance. The only importance they possess depends upon the amount of light they shed upon eternal, unchanging absolutes. For example, Livy is more concerned with Rome the eternal and unchanging agent of history. All occurrences within the Roman Empire have value in so far as they explicate the unchanging agent Rome. Therefore for the Greco-Roman historian the chief

25. Ibid., p. 5411. 1714-1715.

26. Ibid., p. 85 ... 1 2683.

27. Ibid., p. 86 1 2707

28. Ibid., p. 130. 1. 4333.

importance of history lay in the lessons to be learnt from historical events and not in the events themselves. Thus Polybius, who perhaps influenced Marlowe's views on history more than any other historian, has this point of reference:

Polybius does not think that the study of history will enable men to avoid the mistakes of their predecessors and surpass them in worldly success; the success to which the study of history can lead is for him an inner success, a victory not over circumstance but over self. We learn from the tragedy of its heroes not to avoid such tragedies in our own lives, but to bear them bravely when fortune brings them.²⁹

Christian thought changed this because it made all but God changeable and transitory. Man had to change as he moved along the road to salvation passing from sin to a state of grace. Man was no longer a thing apart or even the most important figure in the plan of history. Man was now an agent of God and became a part of the historical process. The fixed, unchangeable focus of Greco-Roman history shifts from political institutions of this world to the Ruler of the next. Man becomes now extremely variable and his work extremely transitory.

Marlowe follows the earlier classical pattern of substantialism rather than the Christian pattern of Hall and Holinshed.

Such history (classical history) has no place for the evolution of institutions and perhaps more important for our purposes, it has no place for development or change in character. Man as a substance is fixed and changeless.³⁰

In *Tamperlane* there are many signs of substantialism -

Not only are the events of both parts of the drama entirely the products of human agents, but those agents themselves are fixed and changeless. They appear upon the stage full-drawn;

29. Collingwood, R.G. The Idea of History. Clarendon Press. Oxon 1946 p. 35-36.

30. Ribner, I. "The Idea of History in Marlowe's *Tamperlane*" Journal of English Literary History. Vol. XX. Dec. 1953. p. 89.

there is no development and when the play ends, they are no more or no less than they had been at the beginning.³¹

An excellent contrast to the above may be found in Shakespeare's Richard II and King Lear -- both characters have stubbornly individual traits from the very start, and neither end as exactly the same as they started.

All the characters in this play are static through all 10 acts. Each action and reaction is thoroughly predictable and all characters appear full-drawn at the moment they enter. This is most true in the case of Tamberlane. It is inevitable that after meeting the terrified Mycetes on the battlefield (Act II Sc IV) Tamberlane should desire a crown.

Is it not passing brave to be a king

And ride in triumph through Persepolis.³²

From then on it is equally inevitable that crown after crown should fall at his feet and that he should die the great monarch of a vast empire.

Tamberlane can be merciful if a city surrenders on the very first day while yet his tents are white. After that the pattern must be rigidly followed and all mercy is quite out of question. He says to the pleading virgins sent as ambassadors from Damascus.

They know my custom: could they not as well

Have sent ye out, when first my milk-white flags

Through which sweet mercy threw her gentle beams

Reflexing them on your disdainful eyes:

As now when fury and incensed hate

31. Ibid., p. 90.

32. Tucker Brooke ed. The Works of Christopher Marlowe. Clarendon Press, Oxon 1910 p. 29. l. 758-9.

Things slaughtering terror from my coal black tents,
And tells for truth, submissions come too late.³³

Ribner notes

"Nothing can move Tamberlane from the course of action for which his nature calls; the conquest of the world and the ruthless destruction of all opposing kings. Not even his love for Zenocrate can deter him from the conquest of her father's army and the destruction of her native city.³⁴

Tamberlane dies without vestige of christian repentance or calling for divine grace as means of salvation. He is still the proud, ambitious world conqueror he was in Act I.

"And in Tamberlane's death, as has been indicated, there is none of the Christian recognition of sin and repentance, the self-awareness and self-understanding which we find in the closing scenes of Richard II and Edward II".³⁵

"My body feels, my soul doth weep to see
Your sweet desires deprived of my company,
For Tamberlane, the scourge of God must die".³⁶

Shakespeare basically follows the same pattern. When we compare the dying words of the pagan Othello with those of Hamlet or Lear both Christian princes the difference is only too clear.

Zenocrate is of a piece with the other figures -- she is merely a passive symbol of beauty. She neither grows nor declines but lives a paste-board existence in the drama moving along well-oiled predestined grooves. Cleopatra and Viola are also models of female beauty and desirability and yet what a different existence they lead!

33. Ibid., p. 58 11 1848-1854.

34. Ribner, I. "The Idea of History in Marlowe's Tamberlane". Journal of English Literary History. Vol. XX Dec. 1953. p. 91.

35. Ibid., p. 91

36. Tucker Brooke ed. The Works of Christopher Marlowe. Clarendon Press, Oxford. 1910. p. 91. 1.

Thus by an astute understanding and incorporation of the doctrine of substantialism Marlowe made his audience aware that they watched an action of earlier times. By deliberately introducing these aspects for sake of historical verisimilitude Marlowe sacrificed tragic heights which are impossible without fuller characterisation. But the success of Tamberlane in the theatre led to a host of imitations e.g. Peele's "Battle of Alcazar".

Kingship

When it comes to a clear examination of the political institutions represented by Marlowe in this drama the most conspicuous one is the concept of Kingship. Marlowe's theory is boldly individualistic and breaks away violently from all known theories. Even the Tudor monarchs--absolute though they were-- were still not quite as revolutionary in the practice as Marlowe's heroes are.

"For Marlowe kingship is attained by human merit. It does not depend upon noble birth, and is, moreover, a goal for which it is the nature of all men to strive and which even the man of most lowly origins may attain.³⁷

Tamberlane from the first is conscious of his ability

I am a Lord, for so many deeds shall prove,
And yet a Shepherd by my parentage.³⁸

And later

When then Casane shall we wish for ought
The world affords in greatest novelty,
And rest attemptless, faint and destitute?
Me thinks we should not, I am strongly moved,

37. Ribner, I. The English History Play. Princeton University Press. Princeton. 1957 p. 65.

38. Tucker Brooke ed. The Works of Christopher Marlowe. Clarendon-Press, Oxon. 1910, p. 15, ll 230 - 31.

That if I should desire the Persian crown,
I could attain it with a wondrous ease.³⁹

Birth is no bar to the throne and the length of the sword determined the limit of sway. This concept is all the more revolutionary when compared with Shakespeare who in his series of English history plays always emphasises that the overthrow of the Lord's Anointed King was irrevocably wrong and inevitably led to confusion. One is also reminded of the great pains that Henry VII took to explain his claim to the throne after the Battle of Bosworth. He made much of the fact that his mother was of the royal house.

Further, the Tudors limited their absolutism by the practice of Christian obedience making the king above his subjects but responsible to God and being the viceroy of heaven. In all the political and religious upsets and turmoils following Henry VIII's break with Rome the Tudors readily exploited this concept of ruling by the grace of God. Tamberlane, on the other hand, is very much the self-made man and monarch earning his way through bloody paths to the throne of empires. He is responsible to nobody but himself.

Marlowe's king is completely absolute, he is responsible to no one but himself. He may do whatever he pleases, has complete power over the life and property of his subjects and is completely outside of law, human or divine.⁴⁰

The crown falls to the most powerful and able. Tamberlane remarks:-

Nature that fram'd us of four elements
warring within our breasts for regiment,
Doth teach us all to have aspiring minds
Wills us to wear ourselves and never rest,

39. Ibid., p. 29. ll 777-782.

40. Ribner, I. The English History Play. Princeton University Press, 1957, p. 65.

Until we reach the ripest fruit of all,
That perfect bliss and sole felicity,
The sweet fruition of an earthly crown.⁴¹

After capturing Fazajeth, sacking Damascus and defeating the Soldan of Egypt, Tamberlane boldly affirms his independence of all factors, earthly or divine.

'Twas I my Lord that gat the victory
The god of war resigns his room to me,
Meaning to make me general of the world,
Jove viewing me in arms, looks pale and wan,
Fearing my power should pull him from his throne.⁴²

Marlowe makes Tamberlane in certain respects typical of the Renaissance prince painted by Machiavelli, who in turn based his findings on contemporary Italian city states.

Whatever measures are necessary to achieve the throne, and to maintain it after it has been achieved, become morally right.⁴³
The Christian virtues of mercy and ruling by love are unknown to Tamberlane and even in his relations with Zenocrate he treats her more as a coveted possession rather than with "agape" --- the type of Christian human love. The king, Marlowe suggests, rules by fear and cunning.

Oblivious of the needs of the whole body social and immersed in egocentric dreams of power, he arrived inevitably at an absolutist political theory.⁴⁴

Marlowe accentuates this portrait by contrasting Tamberlane with Mycetes in the first part and Orcanes in the second. Mycetes is

41. Tucker Brooke ed. The Works of Christopher Marlowe. Clarendon Press, Oxon 1910. p. 32, ll 869-880.

42. Ibid., p. 68, ll 2227. 2232-2235.

43. Kocher, P. Christopher Marlowe. Russell & Russell Inc. New York 1962. p. 189.

44. Ibid., p. 192.

shown as ineffectual, his courtiers are negligent of their duties and his own brother impatient with his weakness.

Mycetes confesses before the entire court of Persia.

I perceive you think

I am not wise enough to be a king.⁴⁵

Later when Cosroe deposes his brother and ascends the throne he boldly declares.

Now send ambassage to thy neighbour kings,

And let them know the Persian king is chang'd:

From one that knew not what a king should do,

To one that can command what longs there to.⁴⁶

The contrast with Orcanes, king of Natolia is a more subtle and indirect one. Orcanes is not only the stern warrior but also the wily statesman who makes a temporary truce with one enemy so that he may defend himself against another. This point is sharpened by making Orcanes defeat Sigismond of Hungary and make a truce with the weaker Christian powers to muster strength against the stronger pagan Tamberlane. But in this attempt Orcanes fails because Tamberlane is militarily and diplomatically his superior. Thus Marlowe seems to say that mere strength is not enough, but that in "politic" too the true ruler must be paramount.

That Virtue solely is the sum of glory

And fashions men with true nobility.⁴⁷

WAR

When Marlowe comes to a treatment of Tamberlane's most significant accomplishments, namely, battle and warfare he becomes completely contemporary. There are several passages parallel to statements

45. Tucker Brooke ed. The Works of Christopher Marlowe. Clarendon Press, Oxon, 1910. p. 10. ll 27-28.

46. Ibid., p. 28. l 725-728.

47. Ibid., p. 61. ll 1970-71.

in Paul Ives "Practice of Fortification" published in London 1589. It is difficult to find any accurate account of Tamberlane's military strategy and certainly in the Renaissance times the tendency to gloss and embroider the Orient was a fatal one.

The following description would apply much more aptly to the army of a Renaissance prince or a levy of the condottieri :

Three hundred thousand men in armour clad,
Upon their prancing steeds, disdainfully
With wanton paces trampling on the ground.
Five hundred thousand footmen threatening shot,
Shaking their swords, their spears and iron bills,
Environing their standard round, that stood
As bristle-pointed as a thorny wood.
Their war-like engines and munition
Exceed the forces of their martial men.⁴⁸

In the Tamberlane Part II there are long discourses on fortification and related matters of military strategy.

Apparently the branches of military science which Marlowe finds most absorbing are fortification and siege-craft, for he brings long treatment of them into Scene ii and scene iii of Act III of Tamberlane Part II and makes frequent slighter mention of them elsewhere. These sciences had achieved high technical development in the wars in Italy during the early sixteenth century.⁴⁹

In this respect Marlowe has failed to present a convincing picture of times other than his own.

48. Ibid., p. 46. l. 1393-1401.

49. Kocher P. Christopher Marlowe. Russell and Russell Inc., New York. 1962. p. 248.

Position of Women

Another important feature by which civilisations and epochs may be assessed is the position of women. By an adroit study of this aspect Marlowe could subtly indicate to his audience the period in which this drama was set. Renaissance England, particularly in the late sixteenth century, was hectically aping the modes of correct and courteous social behaviour as first promulgated in Italy. There was a keen eagerness to always be doing and saying the correct and fashionably acceptable thing. This evidenced by the number of "guide-books" written during these times to direct and instruct people aright. The most famous of these, of course, being Machiavelli's "The Prince" laying down the lines for correct politics. Part of Lyly's meteoric success was due to the fact that he set the trend for genteel conversation in his "Euphues: The Anatomy of Wit". Amongst other such popular guides were Roger Ascham's "The Schoolmaster", More's "Utopia" Sir Thomas Elyot's "The Governor" and Sir Thomas Hoby's translation of one of the most famous books of the entire Renaissance ---- Castiglione's "The Courtier".

With this tremendous emphasis on correctness in all spheres of social life the attitude of Elizabethan England towards the fair sex was given special attention. The conventions of the medieval court of love and chivalry were further stylised and the pedestal on which women had been placed since the establishment of Christendom was now decorated with sonnet-cycles, romance narratives and romantic drama. Sidney's tributes to Penelope Devereux in "Astrophel and Stella" Spenser's "Amoretti" and Shakespeare's sonnet cycle are only high water marks of the vast tide that flattered femininity. Marlowe's contribution to this scheme was his famous "The Passionate Shepherd to his love". It is in this background that we shall have to examine

the women in Tamberlane.

At the very outset it must be mentioned that Marlowe's dramas are one-man works, with the emphasis on man. There is not a single female character with the exception of Dido in any play who ensnares the imagination or fires one's enthusiasm. The men-- Tamberlane, Faustus, Edward- are towering colossi that dwarf all else in the dramas. Most critics are agreed that Marlowe lacked the intuitive understanding and appreciation of the female psyche that could create a Rosalind or Lady Macbeth.

Ribner makes it quite clear that Zenocrate is a pale figure cut to the pattern of a marionette.

Zenocrate is never more than a passive symbol of beauty whose nature it is to follow Tamberlane. Like the others she is a wooden figure cut in a fixed pattern which cannot vary. Thus also the three sons of Tamberlane in Part II are fixed and changeless. Anyras and Celebinus are small copies of their father to whose glory they aspire; Calyphas scorns the glory of battle. Nothing that happens can alter the essential character of these three sons.⁵⁰

There can be little doubt that Zenocrate, Zabina and Olympia are dull. Further they are largely passive and do not act so much as are acted upon or provoke others to action.

To the men in Tamberlane beautiful women are treasures to be won.⁵¹

Zenocrate is captured by Tamberlane and meekly submits.

50. Ribner, I. "The Idea of History in Tamberlane". Journal of English Literary History. Vol. XX Dec. 1953, p. 251.

51. Brooks, C. "Tamberlane's Attitude to Women". Journal of English Literary History. Vol. XXIV, Mar. 1957, p. 3.

Tamb: And now fair Madam, and my noble lords,
If you will willingly remain with me,
You shall have honours, as your merits be:
Or else you shall be forc'd with slavery

Zenoc: I must be pleased perforce, wretched Zenocrate.⁵²
Never does Zenocrate show any spirit of independence and Zabina only mouths abuses which do not impress or ring true. Olympia more or less follows the same pattern.

"Woman is presented as a motive for action: as traditional courtly lovers underwent tests of loyalty to win a mistress favours, so these men find their mistress's favours worth striving for."⁵³

All this is much more in the classical mode than in that of contemporary Renaissance. For the Graeco-Roman world and even for the Oriental world of the Middle East woman was more or less a prized possession because of her beauty. She was to be won and displayed as the proudest feather in one's cap. Her function was at best biological and domestic. Woman as the symbol of fertility and life, woman as the prime mover and inspirer of man's finest thoughts and actions was a concept foreign to the classical world. And Marlowe depicts this faithfully. Zenocrate, Zabina and Olympia are virtuous and weak women at the mercy of Tamburlane.

Zenocrate feels herself unworthy.

Thence rise the tears that so distain my cheeks,
Fearing his love through my unworthiness.⁵⁴

There are however some of the familiar romantic trappings.--- when

52. Tucker Brooke ed. The Works of Christopher Marlowe. Clarendon Press, Oxon. 1910, p. 20. l 448-451-454.

53. Brooks, C. "Tamburlane's Attitude to Women". Journal of English Literary History. Vol. XXIV. Mar. 1957. p. 2.

54. Tucker Brooke ed. The Works of Christopher Marlowe. Clarendon Press, Oxford. 1910, p. 37. l 1049-50.

the sultan of Egypt confronts Tamberlane Zenocrate is in the stereotyped romantic situation of opposing love and duty. The many tributes to the beauty and virtue of the ladies is another familiar romantic aspect. Zenocrate wants honour and virtue and realises that they are possible only by joining with Tamberlane. But Marlowe is not entirely romantically Renaissance. He shifts the emphasis very subtly and by keeping feminine beauty at a premium he gives to it a more classical ballast.

Familiar Renaissance attitudes towards women, erotic, courtly, romantic and moral find expression in Tamberlane, but they do not illustrate a simple code. Erotic feelings are indulged through the identification of feminine beauty with the treasure to be conquered through aspiration. These feelings are made to seem noble rather than base, thus presenting a conception of 'noble' conduct markedly different from the one common to Renaissance books on conduct. Castiglione's courtier aims to serve, but Marlowe's heroes aspire to conquer. His women also strive vigorously for their own goals, and they are not prizes that are won by lovers who serve faithfully but prizes that must be seized.⁵⁵

This is another method employed by Marlowe for indicating to his contemporaries an age other than his own.

Scourge of God

Another factor much emphasised throughout the ten acts of this drama is the concept of Tamberlane being the Scourge of God. This in turn would lead to an examination of the more significant religious motifs in the drama.

55. Brooks, C. "Tamberlane's Attitude to Women". Journal of English Literary History. Vol. XXIV Mar. 1957. p. 11.

"Religious ideas of the play revolve around two conceptions uttered by Tamberlane himself. The earlier and more significant one is that a law of nature commands him and all other men to seek regal power. The latter is that in his conquest he is acting as the Scourge of God".⁵⁶

Force and violence are glorified as being the methods of nature, quite contrary to the Christian emphasis on meekness and non-violence. The achievement of power, political and temporal, was inevitably based on strife and for this Tamberlane quotes divine precedent.

The thirst of reign and sweetness of a crown,
That caused the eldest son of heavenly Ops,
To thrust his doting father from his chair,
And place himself in the imperial heaven,
Mov'd me to manage arms against thy state.
What better president than mighty Jove.⁵⁷

To accuse God for initiating human bloodshed was as far from a Christian epoch as one could wish! To aspire to an earthly crown against a heavenly one needs no further evidence to prove a pagan theology. On the other hand the ideology of eternal strife being the fundamental basis for life comes directly from Hellenic thinkers like Anaximander, Heraclitus and Empedocles.

The very first time that the phrase is used is when Tamberlane claims the title for himself.

I that am term'd the Scourge and Wrath of God,
The only fear and terror of the world,

56. Koehler, P. Christopher Marlowe. Russell and Russell Inc. New York, 1962, p. 70.

57. Tucker Brooke. ed. The Works of Christopher Marlowe. Clarendon Press. Oxon. 1910. p. 32. l 863-868.

Will first subdue the Turk, and then enlarge
Those Christian captives which you keep as slaves,
Burdening their bodies with your heavy chains,
And feeding them with thin and slender fare.⁵⁸

The occasion is significant. Tamberlane here shows sympathy for Christians, a fact that would not be lost on his audience. Therefore by claiming to be the Scourge of God Tamberlane does not necessarily condemn himself for being a bad man. Except in the case of the treacherous Sigismund, nowhere does Marlowe indicate that Tamberlane's victims were being scourged for their sins --- in most cases they are kings defending their rightful possessions. In no case does Marlowe hammer home the Puritanic doctrine of divine retribution and justice.

Professor Kocher suggests that Tamberlane Part I was written as a full drama complete in itself and hence the concept of the Scourge of God is more fully worked out in the second part. Act IV Scene I of Tamberlane contains these significant lines spoken after Tamberlane has killed his son.

Here Jove, receives his fainting soul again,
A form not meet to give that subject essence
Whose matter is the flesh of Tamberlane,
Wherein an incorporeal spirit moves,
Made of the mould whereof thyself consists,
which makes me valiant, proud, ambitious,
Ready to levy power against thy throne,
That I might move the turning spheres of heaven;
For earth and all this airy region
Cannot contain the state of Tamberlane.⁵⁹

58. Ibid., p. 39. ll 1142-1147.

59. Ibid., p. 115. ll 3785-3794.

Here the man of force is equated to the god of force quite against the Biblical teaching that god is beyond the compass or imagination of human beings. Tamberlane in the same scene expands and explicitly pronounces his functions as Scourge.

Villians, these terrors and these tyrannies
(If tyrannies mars justice ye repute)
I execute, enjoin'd me from above,
To scourge the pride of such as Heaven abhors:
Now am I made arch-monarch of the world,
Crown'd and invested by the hand of Jove,
For deeds of bounty and nobility,
But since I exercise a greater name,
The scourge of god and terror of the world,
I must apply myself to fit those terms,
In war, in blood, in death, in cruelty,
And plague such peasants as resist in me
The power of heaven's eternal majesty.⁶⁰

That Marlowe endorses Tamberlane to the end is evidenced by the closing scenes of Tamberlane Part II. There is no hint that god is punishing Tamberlane for his pride or cruelty--- there is only pity that such a great king is dying.

We search Tamberlane's death scene in vain for any sign that he is being visited by God's chastisement. There is no triumphal moralising on the part of his enemies ... All is sympathy, adoration and grief.⁶¹

60. Ibid., p. 116. ll 3820-3832.

61. Koshor, P. Christopher Marlowe. Russell & Russell Inc., New York. 1962. p. 90-91.

It falls to Amyras to pay the final tribute

Meet heaven and earth, and here let all things end,

For earth hath spent the pride of all her fruit,

An heaven consum'd his choicest living fire.

Let earth and heaven his timeless death deplore,

For both their worths will equal him no more.⁶²

The fact that no condemnation of Tamberlane is implied may be further evidenced by comparing the Prologue of this play with that of Dr Faustus. In the former one reads.

Where death cuts off the progress of his pomp,

And murderous Fates throws all his triumph's down.⁶³

There is no moral condemnation and no pointing of a moral. In Dr Faustus the moral is clearly indicated.

Till swollen with cunning, of a self conceit,

His waxen wings did mount above his reach,

And melting heavens conspired his overthrow

And falling to a devilish exercise

And glutt'd now with learnings golden gifts,

He surfeits upon cursed Necromancy,

Nothing so sweet as magic is to him

Which he prefers before his chiefest bliss.⁶⁴

In this way Marlowe indicates a pre-Christian world by glorifying cruelty for it's own sake, and never condemning the excesses that made Christendom give Tamberlane his most terrible title.

As Tamberlane glorifies war, and as his Nature and God are both militarist forces, so any christian sentiment in favour

62. Tucker Brooke ed. The Works of Christopher Marlowe. Clarendon Press, Oxon. 1910. p. 138. ll 4642-4646.

63. Ibid., p. 75. ll 2320-21.

64. Ibid., p. 146-47. ll 20-27.

of peace is presented in such a way as to incur its destruction in derision.⁶⁵

Marlowe consistently presents the glories and wonders of war and depicts peace as decadent. Shakespeare on the other hand in his series of histories shows war as evil.

In this drama Marlowe underlines certain medieval features by presenting Tamberlane as the Scourge of God, by the end of the fifteenth century Christendom had begun to lay greater stress on the justice rather than the mercy of God. This may be found in such works as Skelton's "Of the death of the noble prince, King Edward the Fourth". and Lydgate's "The Fall of Princes" 1400. This tendency to discover divine justice underlying the destiny of the great carried over into Tudor literary criticism e.g. Lodge's "Defence of Poetry" 1579 and Sidney's "Apologie". Critics even brought Seneca into line with De Causibus tragedy. Significantly "The Mirror for Magistrates" also emphasises justice as being the grand virtue.

The book is a mirror because princes and others in authority may find in it not so much a reflection of life's lawlessness here below, which will repel their eyes and turn them upwards, as a reflection of life's law here and above, which they may well take to heart.⁶⁶

Again in George Whetstone's "English Mirror" 1586, a book which many feel is germinal to Marlowe's drama, Tamberlane is not an entirely unsympathetic figure. In fact his cruelties are considered as being part of a divine purpose.

And in truth Tamberlane although he was endued with many excellencies and virtues yet it seemed by his cruelty that God

65. Steane, J.H. Christopher Marlowe. Cambridge University Press. 1964. p. 80.

66. Farnham, W. The Medieval Heritage of Elizabethan Tragedy. University of California Press, Berkeley. 1936. p. 281.

raised him to chasten kings and proud people of the earth.⁶⁷ Thus by exalting the un-Christian characteristics of violence and strife and by subtle inferences to Christian thinking of times earlier than his own Marlowe built up a non-contemporary background for his hero. His audience no matter how unsophisticated could not help but recognise the violent, angry god of the Old Testament as being Tamburlane's god. The glorification of war- even in such righteous contemporary contexts as the struggle against Spain--- could not really be reconciled with a truly Christian conscience in Tudor times.

Medicine

There are a few other stray references to medieval times scattered throughout the drama. One of the most significant being the death of Cosroe in a typically medieval medical pattern.

The heat and moisture which did feed each other,
For want of nourishment to feed them both,
Is dry and cold, and now does ghastly Death
With greedy talons grip my bleeding heart
And like a harpy tires on my life.⁶⁸

Tragedy

Lastly when one examines the pattern of tragedy presented in this drama one can see all too clearly the medieval substance peeping out from behind the Renaissance trappings.

Professor Battenhouse states the matter very clearly and concisely.

67. Whetstone, G. "English Mirror" in Marlowe and the early Shakespeare F.P. Wilson Clarendon Press, Oxon. 1953. p. 22.
68. Tucker Brooke. ed. The Works of Christopher Marlowe. Clarendon Press, Oxon. 1910. p. 32. ll 897-901.

"His tragedy is explainable in terms of the degenerate source of his inspiration... No man by nature can find out the right way to happiness .. the word of God sheweth the right path to happiness".⁶⁹

Tamberlane is consistently shown as being beyond the above scheme of grace and salvation. He deliberately ignores the 'word of God' or he is ignorant of it. If nothing else, this would have been sufficient for Marlowe's audience to recognise a world other than their own.

Further Tamberlane is dedicated to a frankly pagan concept of beauty and not the Christian ideal of heavenly beauty.

The beauties he worships are earthly rather than heavenly. Pools of blood and tongues of fire, crowns, "Humane" poetry, and Zenocrate --- these his imagination exalts. He takes them, mistakenly, for heavenly beauties: he supposes that war illustrates the life of gods, that the pursuit of crowns makes him and his men god-like, that poetry is the human mind's distillation of some "heavenly Quintessence" and that Zenocrate's beauty ranks her with the angels and the "holy Seraphims". Each of these judgements is sturdily pagan --- hence (from a Christian point of view) false.⁷⁰

The audience is therefore invited to pity Tamberlane for his wholly worldly aspirations and his blindness in rejecting the divine. This is certainly not a Renaissance attitude which on the other hand glorified the wonders and joys of this world.

On the other hand if Tamberlane is seen as a shining example of Renaissance humanism and individualism, there is also the implied

69. Battenhouse, Roy W. "Tamberlane's Passions" in Marlowe, Twentieth-Century Views ed. Leach, C. Prentice Hall Inc., New Jersey. 1964. p. 59-60.

70. Ibid., p. 62.

fear at his death, in that he has rejected the wisdom and tenets of the world above. There is a hint of this in the Prologue to Tamberlane Part I.

View but his picture in this tragic glass,

And then applaud his fortunes as you please.⁷¹

The tragic glass is a parallel to the 'Mirror' of the Mirror for Magistrates and Marlowe adds the provocative phrase--"as you please".

Apparently Tamberlane rejects heaven and after life. He makes no direct reference to them. Rather he seems to imply that he will be immortal in, and through the lives of his sons.

My flesh divided in your precious shapes,

Shall still retain my spirit, though I die,

And live in all your seeds immortally.⁷²

This meant a totally atheistic or pagan attitude and clearly marks Tamberlane as being of another era.

Professor Steane has pointed out yet another "pagan" feature of this tragedy. Marlowe has depicted the overthrow of civilization by barbarism. The ancient seats of culture, Egypt and Damascus and Persia, are overthrown. This is highlighted very theatrically in such scenes as Tamberlane's feast with Bazajeth and Zabina in a cage and the ruthless slaying of the virgins of Damascus.

These are all thoughts and actions of an era long before culture and civilization came to Europe at the end of the Dark Ages. Marlowe's audience could hardly have controlled a shudder at this wanton destruction of things highly honourable to their thinking.

The medieval theory of total dependence on the Almighty and the downfall of proud princes is ignored. The tragic as having theological

71. Tucker Brooke ed. The Works of Christopher Marlowe. Clarendon Press, Oxon. 1910. p. 9. ll 7-8.

72. Ibid., p. 136. ll. 4565-67.

implications is thoroughly denied. It is entirely a tale of men and actions of this world.

What the ending of the play leaves us with, then is simply the conclusion that death comes even to the mightiest. Tamberlane's life is not condemned; it is praised; its magnificence was its goodness. Nor are his religious tenets condemned. Holding them, he lived splendid years and reached an end far happier than any which most men suffer, a mighty king surrounded by loving sons and friends.⁷³

Not even in classical drama-- Greek or Latin -- which the Elizabethans so honoured, and which Marlowe knew intimately, was there anything so frankly worldly and individual. This would clearly stamp this play as being pagan.

The total atmosphere and mood engendered by this drama would approximate to Wordsworth's famous dictum --"of old, unhappy, far-off things, and battles long ago."⁷⁴

A deliberate effort may be traced to locate the action in a foreign environment, conjure up the barbaric East in all its splendour the place-names crowded into some speeches have a two-fold object, they carry the imagination away into distant, unknown countries and at the same time suggest the vastness of the territories conquered by Tamberlane many features of Turkish civilisation are mentioned: harems and eunuchs, galleys and Christian slaves, jannisaries and bayshaws.⁷⁵

Not only is the setting and atmosphere romantically remote in time from Marlowe's own, but by building up his figures to super-human proportions he lifts the drama from the level of mere human history

73. Kocher, P. Christopher Marlowe. Russell & Russell Inc., New York. 1962. p. 93.

74. Wordsworth, W. "The Solitary Reaper" in Pages of English Poetry ed. P.E. Dastoor. Narayan Publishing House, Alld. p. 14.

75. Peirier, M. Christopher Marlowe. Chatto & Windus, London 1961, p. 112.

to the realm of legend.

Excessive in all things, elemental, Tamberlane has few human attributes and is, therefore, scarcely measurable by human standards.⁷⁶

In this drama the writers' soaring imagination has outdistanced the world of Elizabethan reality and reached a world as remote and splendid as Illyria or the Forest of Arden.

Thus in the above ways Marlowe has brought to his audience a story with contemporary bearing but essentially a story of other times. Every aspect of Tamberlane's personal and public life have been deftly touched upon in such a manner as to make it quite clear that he was not a citizen of Christendom. One cannot do better than conclude with Battenhouse's comment on the play.

The ten acts of Tamberlane offer one of the most grandly moral spectacles in the whole realm of English Drama.⁷⁷

76. Henderson, P. Christopher Marlowe. Longmans, Green & Co., 1952. p. 86.

77. Battenhouse, R.W. in Christopher Marlowe.. J.P. Steane, Cambridge University Press. 1964, p. 73.

CHAPTER VI

THE JEW OF MALTA

Date and Sources

There is no evidence to determine accurately the date of composition of this play. Critics are divided in opinion as to where it stands chronologically in the list of Marlowe's works. However, the reference to the death of the Duke of Guise in the Prologue would suggest that the play must have been written after December 23, 1588. It is also possible that the Prologue was written last, after the five acts of the drama were completed. On the whole, after careful study of The Stationer's Register, Henslowe's Diary and other relevant documents Tucker Prooke concludes that 1589 cannot be far wrong. Most other Tudor and Elizabethan scholars tend to agree with this view.

When one comes to regard the stage history of this play there can be little doubt that this was one of the most popular of all plays ever to reach the boards in Elizabethan England. The theme and its treatment, with the many attendant melodramatic flourishes was certain to capture the interest and imagination of the contemporary Englishman. The only text available is Heywood's edition of 1633 -- the date is proof enough of the long-lived popularity of the play -- and it is certain that the text had been amended and adapted by quite a few hands since it left Marlowe's study. The version we have today is substantially the same as that played before King Charles I and Queen Henrietta Maria at His Majesty's Theatre at Whitehall by Her Majesty's Servant at the Cock-pit.

It was probably made from a manuscript that had already suffered forty years of re-writing and adaptation to suit

the tastes of several generations of play-goers, before it finally fell into the hands of the conscienceless Heywood who cut and recast it to suit his own rather erratic taste.¹

Heywood also wrote an Epistle Dedicatory, a new Prologue and Epilogue for the performance at Court and at the Cockpit Theatre.

When one comes to an examination of the possible sources for this play, these are several and varied. The main story is one that is largely Marlowe's own invention, though the tale of the wicked Jew whose beautiful daughter led Christian gallants to their ruin is a very old one in the medieval European tradition. Shakespeare drew on the same tradition when he wrote The Merchant of Venice. For the character of Barabas scholars find some actual historical antecedents. Contarini's History of the Turkish war in the Mediterranean, which Marlowe might have consulted for his earlier play on Tamburlane, mentions one Joseph Nassi or Miques, a Jew of great political importance. Nassi was an ally of the Turks against the Venetians. In return for his services the Turks made Nassi Governor of the Christian island of Naxos. In the late 1590's, almost contemporary with the writing of this drama, there was another very rich and powerful Jew, David Passi, who was one of the most trusted and influential advisers to the Sultan at Constantinople.

Nassi became confidential advisor to the Sultan. Like Barabas, he was in political and financial relationship with the courts of France and Germany, and false to both. Like Barabas, he was rich --- the French Government at one time owed him 150,000 ducats.....

David Passi aided the Turks in constructing models of Crete and Malta, in preparation of their attacks, kept the Sultan

1. Bakeless, J. Christopher Marlowe Jonathan Cape, London, 1938, p.174.

informed of events in Christendom and became so powerful that the Venetian diplomats report him as "able to do great harm and great good". There was also the converted English Jew, Edward Brandon, who was wealthy, was involved in political intrigue, and became Governor of the Channel Isles.²

In 1585 there was published The Navigations, peregrinations, and voyages made into Turkey by Nicholas Nicolay, by T. Washington. In this is mentioned the siege of Tripoli where a traitor led the Turks into the city by telling them of the weakest portions of the wall and bastion. Barabas similarly informs Calymath about the fortifications of Malta.

Fear not, my Lord, for here against this sluice,
The rock is hollow, and of purpose digg'd
To make a passage for the running streams
And common channels of the city.³

Nicholas de Villegagnon's account of the siege of Tripoli in Discours de la Guerre de Malta mentions one Octavio Ferneso. This provides Marlowe with the name for his Governor Fernese. In doing so he ignores the gallant Lavalette who actually defended Malta against the Turks.

"The contemporary historical event Marlowe took for the background to his play was the Turkish siege of Malta a couple of decades before".⁴

When the Turkish Pasha calls a noble "Callapine" (Act I l. 252) one notices an obvious carry-over from Tamperlane. For the name Ithamore, Marlowe indulges in a sardonic twist of his peculiarly

2. Ibid., pp. 183-4.

3. The Works of Christopher Marlowe ed. Tucker Brooke, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1910. pp. 297 ll 2089-92.

4. Rowse, A.L. Christopher Marlowe. Macmillan & Co., London. 1964.p.52.

individual humour. In the library at Corpus was a manuscript recalling the miracles and other holy acts of the sainted Kentish Bishop Ithamar. It is typically Marlowian that the saint of the English Church should become the evil, plotting Moor.

For purpose of this play Marlowe changed history and made Malta fall to the Turks so that Barabas could be made Governor. In actual fact the Turks were successfully repulsed by the valiant efforts of Lavalette.

The incident of the quarrel between the friars Jacomo and Pernadino is taken from an old popular story.

"Lastly the episode of the friar, who having struck a corpse standing erect and is convinced he has killed a man, is the subject of many stories in various languages. The version to which Marlowe could most easily have access is A Merry Jest of Dane Hew, Monk of Leicester, published in English during his lifetime".⁵

That this is one of the most puzzling of all Tudor plays is certain and the varied opinions of scholars serves to bear this out all the more. Most notable is the fact that the promise of the first two acts is not fulfilled in the latter three and some have even reasoned that therefore there is another hand besides Marlowe's in the writing of The Jews of Malta. Opinions range from

There is indeed hardly any explanation short of insanity which in a modern dramatist would account for the sudden change from the vivid realisation of Barabas' character, as indicated in the first two acts, to the complete absence of sympathetic insight which marks the last three.⁶

5. Poivier, M. Christopher Marlowe. Chatto & Windus, London 1951. p. 150.

6. Tucker Brooke, ed. The Works of Christopher Marlowe. Clarendon Press, Oxford 1910. p. 232.

to the more probable comments of Bakeless.

It is quite possible that Marlowe started the play with the best of intentions, grew tired of it, or needed money in a hurry --- and finished it in the quickest easiest way he could.⁷

and the more charitable views of Fowse.

Academic critics have made heavy weather of the contrast between the first half of the play, and the second: but in the world of real writing authors are not always perfectionists, and are more apt to think in terms of popular success... This self-willed young man of genius was not writing a play to please the professors--such people as Gabriel Harvey-- but to please excitable and primitive Elizabethan playgoers.⁸

Whatever may have been the reasons for the distinct shift in levels, there has been a marked difference in opinion about the general tone of the play. There is one group of critics led by T.S. Eliot, who find The Jew of Malta a play of grim and ironic humour, a comedy in dark shades.

Eliot wrote

I say farce, but with the uneffected humour of our times the world is a misnomer, it is the farce of the English humour, the terribly serious, even savage comic humour, the humour which spent its last breath in the decadent genius of Dickens.⁹

Professor Steane has also agreed to this interpretation

He (Barabas) himself is a comic villain but a brilliant one...

He is also the man who makes you laugh, and, in lively and

7. Bakeless, J. Christopher Marlowe, Jonathan Cape, London 1938, p.173.

8. Fowse, A.L. Christopher Marlowe. Macmillan & Co. London, 1964.
pp. 83-84.

9. Eliot, T.S. Selected Essays. Faber & Faber Ltd, London 1932, p.123.

imaginative reading, The Jew of Malta is a very funny play.¹⁰ Douglas Cole finds many similarities with the portrayal of Vice in the medieval moralities and concludes "In the last analysis The Jew of Malta remains a comedy of evil-with a Marlowian twist".¹¹ Howse speaks of "a sort of savage humour, Marlowe's sardonic twist".¹² Philip Henderson also calls this play a "Savage comedy".¹³

However there is another opinion on this drama which finds a deeper and more serious purpose than a first reading would warrant. Prof. Harry Levin, Howard Babb and other contemporary American scholars have felt that Marlowe was writing this play with his tongue in his cheek. This is not unusual with Marlowe, nor is The Jew of Malta the only play where this kind of ironic writing is to be found. Barabas is not seen as a horrid, grotesque caricature who degenerates into a monster, but as a sympathetic figure who by alienating the world is alienated from his own self. His crimes and evil plotting are the result of his frustration at being a discriminated under-dog. "His hatred is the bravado of the outsider whom nobody loves and his revenges are compensatory efforts to supply people with good reasons for hating him".¹⁴ Babb sees Barabas^{as} Marlowe's version of the old Jewish ritual of the scape goat.

And Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness: And the

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10. Steane, J.B. Marlowe. Cambridge University Press, 1964. p. 171.
11. Cole, Douglas. Christopher Marlowe. Princeton University Press, N.J. 1962, p. 144.
12. Howse, A.L. Christopher Marlowe. Macmillan & Co., London 1964, p. 84.
13. Henderson, P. Christopher Marlowe. Longmans, Green & Co., London, 1952, p. 103.
14. Levin, H. The Overreacher. Beacon Press, Boston 1964. p. 78.

goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land

not inhabited: and he shall let go the goat in the wilderness.¹⁵

If one accepts the view that Marlowe's mind was keen and penetrating, that it was enforced by the learning at Cambridge and that it was an intellect fascinated by ideas and humanistic concepts, then it would be difficult to accept the earlier view that The Jew of Malta is little more than a fine piece of blood and thunder. There is sufficient evidence that Marlowe while writing with his tongue in his cheek and giving the play the gloss of contemporary melodrama was actually hitting harder and deeper at vital concepts of Elizabethan times. Even those critics who explain this drama as a grotesque comedy have spent time and space in analysing the Machiavellian and Revenge themes and motivations in the play --- this means that even they do realise that there is more to this play than fine poetry and sensational melodrama.

It is the purpose here to discover the deeper levels of meaning that Marlowe hoped to convey and since one's primary purpose is to discover and assess the historical implications of the play, it is from here that one must begin.

Firstly, unlike Tamperlane, this play deals with events almost contemporary with Elizabethan times. The Meltese, Spaniards and Jews shown in the play are more or less the kind of people that the average Elizabethan could easily recognise and converse with as against the Soldan of Egypt, Bazajeth or Orcanes of the earlier play. Malta was a very important mercantile base for trade with the Orient and many Elizabethan merchants and sailors were familiar with the place. As has been noted earlier there was an actual attack on Malta

15. Leviticus. Ch. 16 V. 21-22.

by the Turks which was successfully repulsed only a few years before the writing of the play. The only figures which would not be familiar, recognisable persons were the Turks --- the bassoes, bawshaws and pashas. However even they were more contemporary than the Turks depicted in Tamperlane. Thus the initial problem of bringing figures from the past into the contemporary stage was an almost negligible one for Marlowe. Further he makes little or no attempt at distinguishing between Muslim, Jew and Christian by means of externals, except in the case of his protagonist, otherwise Ferneze, Calymath and Del Bosco, the Spanish Admiral, speak and behave alike. Ithamore and Pillia Borsa are also of a piece-- both characters of a lower social level, though of different races and nationalities.

Therefore one is compelled to examine the broader and more fundamental strains in the drama to find historical clues. While doing so one first examines the question of Jews and anti-semitism. It may be worthwhile to mention here that Barabas' much more famous descendent Shylock will quite often come to mind. One cannot help but note that Shakespeare is much the more humane and tolerant of the two playwrights and is less concerned with concepts and the world of the mind than is Marlowe. However the debt The Merchant of Venice owes to The Jew of Malta is only too obvious.

One point comes to mind at once that with the production of this play the stereotype of the stage Jew was created for the English theatre and this stock figure cast a long shadow down the corridors of English literature. Not only must one remember Shylock but also Isaac the Jew of Ivanhoe and Fagin of Oliver Twist.

It (The Jew of Malta) established two new traditions of the English Theatre, the stage Jew and the stage miser.¹⁶

16. Bakeless, J. Christopher Marlowe. Jonathan Cape, Lond 1938, p.168.

The great false nose, the red beard and wig which were the hallmarks of the stage Shylock and others of his tribe may very well have begun with Barabas.

How well acquainted Marlowe was with the history of this unfortunate race is difficult to say. His studies in divinity must have taught him something. If, as is often conjectured, he was one of Walsingham's undercover agents in France it is quite possible that he may have met some Jews in the course of his travels. Certainly London in the 1580's and 90's had a fair compliment of Jews both in the business houses and in the medical and legal professions. It is even possible that Marlowe had access to some Jewish writings in translation -- the Talmudic studies perhaps -- by virtue of being one of Raleigh's coterie. In any case it would not have been difficult for a man of parts to have got information about the Jews in Tudor England.

The Jews because of their peculiar ethnic and religious differences from Christendom were believed by the medieval and Renaissance Christians to be a thoroughly depraved community. A myriad prejudices, superstitions and pejorative beliefs about them were prevalent all through Europe.

The reason for this wealth of misinformation is not far to seek. For the medieval Christian Judaism was not so much a different religious faith as a distortion of the true faith of the Catholic Church. Hence the Catholic Church in the early years of Christendom helped considerably in the preservation of Jewry because it hoped that the light of true faith and wisdom would surely one day dawn upon it. On the other hand this point of view worked against the Jews, for what wickedness were they not capable of once having rejected Divinity and saving grace at the very fountain head? What

villianly was too great for those who plotted and destroyed the Son of God Himself? For this attitude there was precedence in Holy Writ itself --- "He came unto His own and His Own received Him not"¹⁷ Marlowe has drawn on these popular notions and beliefs in The Jew of Malta. When Barabas begins educating Ithamore to the role of villiany, the latter salutes him thus ---

Oh brave Master, I worship your nose for this.¹⁸

The confession of the dying Abigail shock the listening friars and a new comer asking about the crimes of Barabas voices a popular misconception about the religious practices of the Jews.

What, has he crucified a child?¹⁹

Later when Ballamira and Pilia Lorsa are entertaining the besotten Ithamore they question him about his master and he replies with a string of popular prejudices against Jewry.

Ith: 'Tis a strange thing of that Jew, he lives upon
pickled grasshoppers and sauced mushrooms.

Bar: What slave's this? The Governor feeds not as I do(aside)

Ith: He never put a clean shirt since he was circumcised,

Bar: Oh rascal ! I change myself twice a day (aside)

Ith: The hat he wears, Judas left under the elder when he
hang'd himself.

Bar: 'Twas sent me for a present from the great Cham (aside)

Ith: Amasty slave he is.²⁰

The story of Abigail and her rival suitors was an old one and generally accepted throughout Western Europe.

17. St John, Gospel of Ch. I v 11

18. The Works of Christopher Marlowe ed. Tucker Brooke, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1910, p. 266 ll. 938.

19. Ibid. p. 281, l. 1505.

20. Ibid. p. 294, l. 1982-1991.

... the legend of the Jew's daughter, who serves as a decoy in luring a Christian youth to his doom by her father's knife in their dark habitation. The story is deeply rooted in those accusations of ritual murder, which seem to result from misunderstandings of the Jewish Passover rite, and have left a trail of bloodier revenges-- across whole countries and over many centuries --- than could ever be comprehended within the theatrical medium.²¹

Barabas is generally pointed out as unreliable, scheming and totally evil. Barabas by virtue of his birth shares in the approbium cast on all Jews.

First, Barabas as a Jew automatically inherits a reputation as a poisoner, hypocrite, miser, traitor and general unmitigated devil. Disclosing his treachery in the final act, Fernese explains, "How, Selim, note the unhallow'd deeds of Jews" (Act V 1 2376) -- not of Machiavellians, we notice.²²

But Marlowe does more than merely catalogue contemporary prejudices. There is plenty of evidence to show that he could see behind these superstitious trappings and has depicted very accurately the position of the Jews. It would appear that he had read about the subject carefully.

After Diaspora began with the break down of the Roman Empire the Jews were scattered all over Europe. With the strictures of the Church against the practice of usury the Jews were permitted by law to lend money, finance trade and industry and even mint coins. Thus there grew up the popular tradition of the miserly, money.lending Jew. After the 12th Century most kingdoms of Europe passed specific

21. Levin, H. The Over-reacher Beacon Press, Boston 1964. p. 71.

22. Koehler, P. Christopher Marlowe Russell & Russell, N.Y. 1962, p. 201.

laws laying down the duties of Jews regarding the minting and lending money. Under the caliphs and the Carolingian Kings commerce, trade and industry flourished under Jewish management and the kings protected and helped the Jews build up their huge financial empires. It was only with the rise of the Lombards that the Jew found a serious rival in the field of banking and finance. From then onwards anti-Semitism grew apace and national economic interests joined forces with religious prejudice to war against the Jews with implacable cruelty and bigotry.

Property taxes, sometimes as high as 33% were the most common means of speedily extracting large amounts of cash from the Jews. Fines of all kinds were imposed on entire Jewish communities, to punish the transgressions of a single member, or sometimes without any reason at all. It has been estimated that in the 12th century, English Jewry, constituting one quarter of one per cent of the population, furnished fully eight per cent of the total income of the Treasury. Similar conditions prevailed throughout medieval Europe.²³

Marlowe seems aware of this practice for in the First Act we find Fernese specifically calling a conference with the Jews of Malta to levy upon them alone the tribute money owed to the Turks.

Reader: First, the tribute money to the Turks shall all be levied amongst the Jews, and each of them to pay one half of his estate.²⁴

Poor Barabas must needs submit to superior power

23. Encyclopedia Americana Vol. 16. 1965. p. 77.

24. The Works of Christopher Marlowe ed. Tucker Brooke, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1910. v. 249. l. 300-2.

Well then, my Lord, say, are you satisfied?
You have my goods, my money, and my wealth,
My ships, my store, and all that I enjoy'd;
And having all, you can request no more.²⁵

This action by Ferneze was supported by the "law of aliens" -- a fairly common feature in Western Europe even till Tudor times. By this law the king of the land was heir to all estates of foreigners dying in his land. Since only Christians could claim full citizenship or nationality the Jews were also classified as aliens. Thus Barabas perhaps gave in to Ferneze knowing he had few legal rights and if he insisted on not parting with his wealth during his lifetime, his money was surely forfeit at his death.

Further the physical appearance of Barabas on the stage, his clothes and habit which marked him apart from the members of the church had sanction by ecclesiastical law. In 1215 Pope Innocent III ordered all Jews resident or visiting in Christendom to wear a distinctive garment or badge to distinguish them from the Christians. This perhaps was the origin of the Jewish Kaftan. Marlowe gives Barabas a great nose --- an ethnic feature to emphasise his Jewishness -- and a great red beard and hair. It is also probable that following the Tudor stage convention of dressing characters from different walks of life in distinctly different clothes, the stage Barabas wore garments that his audience would readily recognise as being Jewish. In this practice Shakespeare faithfully copies Marlowe in his presentation of Shylock.

In 1260 the Jews were banished from England, in 1306 from France and the smaller dukedoms of Germany followed suit soon after.

25. Ibid., p. 250-1. ll. 369-373.

It was not until the days of Cromwell that the edict of banishment was formally annulled in 1650. However this law was not strictly enforced and there are many signs that London was not free of Jews during these four centuries.

Law or no law there were a good many Jews in Queen Elizabeth's England. Henry VIII had brought a rabbi to England. His daughter Elizabeth numbered among her ladies-in-waiting during Marlowe's lifetime, a Portugese Jewess, who rejected and English nobleman's offer of marriage rather than abandon her ancient faith. There are even casual allusions to the custom of hiring courts suits from Jewish pawn brokers. Throughout Elizabeth's reign a house for converted Jews, was maintained in Chancery Lane. Their signatures in Hebrew characters still exist. And, as the study of Hebrew was essential to the education of Christian divines, the Universities seem to have welcomed men learned in Jewish literature and not to have been unduly curious as to their religion. Marlowe might easily have known one or two Hebrew scholars in his Cambridge days.²⁶

Further the royal physician to the Queen herself was a Jew-- Dr. Lopez. He was a man of means and an important figure till he was convicted for treason and hanged in 1594. His trial and execution gave a new lease of popularity to this play.

From the delineation of the character of Harabas it is clear that Marlowe had carefully studied the Jew at close quarters and did not merely fall back upon popular misconceptions. Harabas is prone to refer to, and quote from the old Testament throughout the length of

26. Bakeless, J. Christopher Marlowe. Jonathan Cape, London 1938, p. 176.

the play. A few examples of this are given

Thus trowls our fortunes in by land and sea,
And thus are we on every side enrich'd:
These are the blessings promised to the Jews.
And herein was old Abrams happiness.²⁷

This would refer to the calling apart of Abraham.

Now the Lord had said unto Abraham, get thee out of thy
country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house,
unto a land that I will show thee:
And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee,
and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing:
And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that
curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth
be blessed.²⁸

Barabas shows his acquaintance with the story of Job when the three
Jews come to comfort him at the loss of his estate.

When Barabas awaits Abigail and the hidden treasures of the
convent he invokes his god in this fashion.

Oh thou that with a fiery pillar led'st
The sons of Israel through the dismal shades,
Light Abraham's off-springs;²⁹

When Moses led the children of Israel out of Egyptian bondage

The Lord went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud to
lead them the way, and by night in a pillar of fire,
to give them light; to go by day and night:
He took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the
pillar of fire by night, from before the people.³⁰

27. Tucker Brooke ed. The Works of Christopher Marlowe. Clarendon Press
Oxford 1910. p. 245. l. 141-44.

28. Genesis. Ch. 12. vs 1-3.

29. Tucker Brooke.. p.258 ll 651-53.

30. Exodus. Ch. 13 vs 21-22.

Takeless in comparing Shylock with Parabas notes that both dramatists have cleverly picked upon the salient features of Jewry in their portraits.

They have both caught and reproduced typically Jewish traits--strong family affection, habitual quotation from the old Testament, clan feeling, religious strictness, and rigid observance of dietary regulations. Jewish commercial acumen is an essential element in both plays.³¹

Given all the above evidence one has to determine how Marlowe treats the question of Jews in a predominantly Christian environment. He was despite all his independence of mind and unorthodoxy of ideas still an Elizabethan very tenaciously rooted in his time. This would account for his acceptance and inclusion of many contemporary anti-Semitic notions. But Marlowe's apparent study of the question suggests that he had something more solid to offer than a compendium of derogatory observations rendering the Jew a pariah in society and a monster of depravity amongst men.

Firstly there is his choice of names. Abigail comes from the Old Testament account of King David's anger against Nabal the sheep owner and how Abigail pleaded for mercy and her soft words softened David. In the Biblical account Abigail was understanding, obedient to authority and willing to take her husband's punishment upon herself

And when Abigail saw David, she hasted and lighted off
the ass, and fell before David on her face, and bowed
herself to the ground;

And fell at his feet, and said, Upon me, my Lord, upon me
let this iniquity be; and let thy handmaid, I pray thee speak
in thine audience, and hear the words of thy handmaid.³²

³¹. Takeless, J. Christopher Marlowe Jonathan Cape, London 1938, p.17
³². I Samuel Ch. 25. vs 24-25.

This fits most aptly with Marlowe's Abigail who suffers because of her father's evil and dies in a spirit of calm resignation. However it is in the choice of a name for his protagonist that Marlowe's deeper motives are fully realised. Barabas was the wicked and violent criminal in the Gospels chosen by the Jews in preference to Christ. The wickedness and violence of the Antiochian Barabas are very pronounced. In the Gospels the robber Barabas and all he stood for was given precedence over Christ and all he stood for. So in the play those who choose Barabas' Way -- the way of gold, the way of revenge, the way of Machiavelli-- also deny Christ. Jewishness for the Elizabethan amongst other things also connoted a lack of faith and love. The Jew was a betrayer of Christ for self-gain-- Judas who betrayed his master for thirty silver pieces. Thus by implication the Christians also come in for criticism when they betray their faith and approximate to the "Jewishness" of Barabas as defined above.

The Jew becomes the dramatic symbol of such Christian moral evils as greed, egoism, infidelity and worldliness... the Christians come in for criticism to the degree that they betray their faith and approach the avarice and egoism of Barabas, to the degree that they substitute gold for God.³³

Marlowe uses the Jew and popular notions about Jewry as a kind of inverted principle to lash Christians and to show them their hypocrisy. This was done by other dramatists as well. In The Three Ladies of London 1594 a Christian merchant in debt to a Jew is brought to trial in Turkey. He seeks to escape payment by invoking an old Turkish law that would absolve him of his debt if he embraced Islam. Rather than be the cause of renouncing of faith the Jew voluntarily forgives the Christian. Here the Christian is shown to be more

33. Cole, Douglas. Christopher Marlowe. Princeton University Press, Princeton 1962. pp. 134-5.

"Jewish" than the Jew.

"For the Christian of the Elizabethan age, as for the Christian of centuries previous, 'Jew' and 'Turk' were familiar epithets applied not only to opponents of Christianity but also to those Christians who acted as the non-Christian was imagined to behave, especially in the manifestations of infidelity, usury and greed.³⁴

Thus by his close study of the Jew Marlowe does not necessarily hold him up as an example or a better alternative to the Christian. But in spite of the many popular anti-semitic notions, some of which Marlowe may quite possibly have shared, Marlowe shows that the Jew is just as good, or rather as bad as the non-Jew. In his concept he was certainly in advance of his times which firmly believed in the superiority of the Christian in almost all matters. Historically, therefore, one may conclude that Marlowe's depiction of Jewry was as accurate as was possible considering the prejudices and theatre laws of the times. It would certainly not be correct to class him with the strongly anti-semitic.

One comes next to examine the second important factor in this play-- a factor which is perhaps the dominant one in more than one Marlevian dramas. This is the influence of Machiavelli. Every critic has taken great pains to extract every reference to the Italian thinker in this play and all are agreed that this is a play of "politic". In fact the word occurs ^{no} less than 13 times in the extant text and always at important moments in the action. This word was employed by Marlowe in both its senses as applied by Elizabethans.

"A righteous ordering by the Government of public affairs for the good of the people as a whole. In it's alternative sense

34. Ibid. p. 132.

policy designates the servicing of one's private ends by cunning or deceit; the normal Elizabethan version of Machiavellianism.³⁵

There can be no doubt that double-dealing and deliberate deception for private gain is woven into the sinews of the plot. Not only is this true of the protagonist but Ferneze, del Bosco, Ithamore, Bellamira and Pilia Borza are all in the game. Ironically the most reliable are the Turks. Prof. Steane has pointed out that the prevailing morality is that of Al Capone's Chicago. The conversation between Ferneze and Barabas in Act 1 proves amply that this is a world where one eats or is eaten, lying static is impossible and the prize goes to the strong and cunning.

A spectacle of monstrous villiany. Into the character of Barabas Marlowe has poured all the vilest ingredients from the bugbears of contemporary popular imagination fusing the infidel Jew with the ruthless Machiavellian, and animating the mixture with the spirit of morality Vice.³⁶

To clinch the argument the Prologue brings the figure of Machiavelli in person on to the English Stage.

An interesting question that arises is how well was Marlowe acquainted with the writings of Machiavelli. The Prince was not published in English till 1640- What however was read widely in Elizabethan England was the reply to Machiavelli by Innocent Gentillet --

Discours sur le meyens de bien gouvenor-- contre Nicolas Machiavelli.

This was translated from the original French into Latin in 1577 and an English Version circulated in manuscript before it was printed in 1602- Gentillet's pamphlet was the source of most of the misreading and misconceptions about Machiavelli outside Italy. Hardin Craig

35. Babb, H. "Policie in Marlowe's Jew of Malta" Journal of English Literary History Vol. 24. Mar. 1957, p. 86

36. Cole, D. Christopher Marlowe Princeton University Press, Princeton 1962, p. 123.

brings evidence to show that The Prince was also read in manuscript and there exist seven manuscript copies of three different English translations. Being one of Raleigh's group of intellectual, inquiring friends Marlowe might have had access to one of these manuscript copies. Machiavelli was, interestingly enough, known in the sixteenth century as the author of The Prince and his other works --- the Discourses and dramas were hardly known outside Italy. However the ideas of Machiavelli were abroad, and though they were generally misconstrued and debased, Machiavelli was the paramount political and intellectual influence of the Renaissance. If one concludes that Marlowe was a member of Walsinghams anti-Roman Catholic espionage net-work, then the ideas of Machiavelli were inescapable. Renaissance politics in England, especially under Queen Elizabeth, had the flavouring of parliamentary democracy but essentially was unprincipled and shrewd as the best of the Italian city states

"Another and more favourable opportunity came to him(Marlowe) in London, for the politicians of his day knew it from cover to cover, and the man who was the friend of Raleigh and Walsingham, and so, directly or indirectly, in touch with Cecil and Leicester, must have heard its principles debated by those who not only were most competent to judge and appreciate them, but had had practical experience of their working in the diplomatic circles of Europe.³⁷

It is interesting to note that most of The Prince contains a set of principles for practical politics which were not thought up by Machiavelli. Rather the book is a compilation of those principles which were already in practice by the condottieri. Machiavelli.

37. Ellis-Fermor, U.M. Christopher Marlowe. Methuen & Co., London 1927, p. 89.

sets up men like Caesar Borgia as against those who are sentimental or hypocritical. This stripping away of the false mask of shallow piety or idealism and exposing the naked, selfish aspiring mind of man apparently appealed directly to Marlowe.

There was the fascination of a new world, forbidden and reputed full of untold evil, of a discipline and a doctrine by which man's mind might reach supremacy, if not beyond the material world, yet at least within it, a picture of a man unshakable, self-contained and self-reliant. All this moreover, was to be achieved by the stripping away of lies, of sentimentalism and of superstition.³⁸

Kyd had already brought the ideas of Machiavelli onto the stage in The Spanish Tragedy. Marlowe brought Machiavelli himself onto the stage and even more openly advocated Machiavellian principles in more than one drama. Prof. Rowse however feels that Marlowe's attitude is a rather undecided and wavering one.

We have the feeling that his attitude to Machiavellianism is an ambivalent one, he is too intelligent not to know that wealth and power have often been achieved by the most unscrupulous means, that atleast they necessitate a more than average egoism, the calculated concentration on ends without too much concern for the means employed. Always an element in power, whether political or financial, at all times and in all places, these facts were never ^{more} crudely in evidence than in the religious conflicts of the sixteenth century.³⁹

Some critics have therefore taken this play as Marlowe's object lesson in evil. As Barabas grows more evil he becomes less human,

38. Ibid., p. 94.

39. Rowse, A.L. Christopher Marlowe Macmillan & Co., London 1964., p. 86.

as his crimes multiply his stature diminishes. An interesting parallel would be Shakespeare's Macbeth, though Shakespeare saves his hero from becoming quite the grotesque figure that Barabas becomes

He (Barabas) dwindles into a skinny figure of hatred; motivated solely by cunning, cruelty and lust; the proud aspiring verse degenerates into an electric crackle of irony and malice.⁴⁰

Prof. Levin has another point of view. He sees clearly the exposition of the Mosaic Law of retribution and revenge - an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. But as the play progresses the influence of the Old Testament gives way to that of The Prince. A careful comparison of the texts of The Prince and The Jew of Malta bring to light interesting contrasts and similarities.

It would appear that Marlowe wrote this play not in the slipshod manner that some would have him, on the other hand he carefully wove together more than one level of meaning and purpose. For the groundlings and the average man in the street who went to the theatre for entertainment, in much the same spirit as the average cinema-fan flocks to the cinema-halls today, there was an exciting and unusual story full of action, violence, melodrama and sensation, characters covering a wide range of races and interests, and a locale foreign enough to be unique. But for the more discerning and educated spectator Marlowe seems to be pointing a more severe moral. He does not seem to be decrying the efficacy of Machiavelli so much as showing up the deficiencies of imperfect Machiavellianism. In a typically sardonic fashion he seems to be saying that had Barabas avoided certain mistakes success would surely have been his.

If one takes into account the Baines Note, Kyd's letter to Sir John Puckering and the general tone of Marlowe's other work

40. Henderson, P. Christopher Marlowe. Longmans Green and Co., London. 1952, p. 104,

one must conclude that this manner of ironic comment was typical of Marlowe. Further, from what we know of him, Machiavelli's ideology was one that would irresistably attract an unorthodox questioning mind such as Marlowe's. He knew only too well the chasm that lay between the public outcries against Machiavelli and the private practice of his principles by all the leading rulers of Europe. In view of this it is singularly apt that Marlowe should teach Machiavellianism in this play in a negative fashion - by showing up an inept Machiavellian. The Walsinghams of the day were expected to see through the melodramatic trappings and recognise the mistakes of Barabas with a view to avoiding them in their own diplomatic relationships. It is to the credit of Marlowe that he did all this, pointed out a serious moral, commented on vital matters and yet produced a play which was a theatrical success for decades.

It is therefore necessary to closely compare the tenets of The Prince with the practices of Barabas to understand Marlowe's careful planning of the drama. To start with in Chapter V of The Prince one finds

When those states have been acquired which are accustomed to live at Liberty under their own laws, there are three ways of holding them. The first is to despoil them; the second is to go and live there in person; the third is to allow them to live under their own laws, taking tribute of them, and creating within the country a government composed of the few who will keep it friendly to you.⁴¹

Marlowe makes Fernese and Calymath enter into the third kind of relationship mentioned by Machiavelli. The Turks and Maltese are "in league" (1.198) and when the Governor asks he is answered by Calim thus :-

Gov: ...what at our hands demand ye?
Calim: The ten years tribute that remains unpaid.⁴²

41. Machiavelli, N. The Prince ed E.R.P.Vincent. Jaico Publishing House Bombay 1934.p.28.(in all succeeding references this edition is used).

42. Tucker Brooke ed. The Works of Christopher Marlowe. Clarendon Press, Oxford 1910. p. 247. l. 235-6.

Here is one small instance of Marlowe's close knowledge of Machiavelli. That this is deliberately introduced into the text is obvious as the situation and characters are entirely unhistorical.

Next in Chapter VII Machiavelli speaks of those, such as Barabas, who rise to power from humble beginnings.

Such as these depend absolutely on the goodwill and fortune of those who have raised them, both of which are extremely inconstant and unstable...the man who thus becomes a prince is of such great genius as to be able to take immediate steps for maintaining what fortune has thrown into his lap.⁴³

Here is clearly pointed out one of Barabas' glaring errors. Having risen to the eminence of Governor of Malta due to the kindness of Calymath, Barabas becomes a turncoat and plans to betray his benefactor to Ferneze. He thus fails to follow Machiavellian political precepts and is caught in his own trap by the very people whose favour he hopes to win.

Again in Chapter VIII the universal nature of Barabas' treachery is pointed out for a tactical error.

It cannot be called virtue to kill one's fellow-citizens, betray one's friends, be without faith, without pity, and without religion; by these methods one may indeed gain power, but not glory.⁴⁴

In the above passage the word that needs special attention is "virtue" the Renaissance summumbonum of virtue. A man's virtue was the sum of all those qualities necessary for success and glory in life. Barabas lacks this supreme virtue because he does all that Machiavelli specifically lists as being unwise. In his great speech to Ithamore Barabas at great length very gleefully expounds his many crimes (Act 2. 1.939-966). Further, should such public crimes be necessary Machiavelli writes very pertinently about them -

43. Ibid., p. 43.

44. Ibid., p. 45.

well committed may be called those (i.e. crimes) which are perpetrated once for the need of securing oneself, and which afterwards are not persisted in, but are exchanged for measures as useful to the subjects as possible.⁴⁵

Barabas on the other hand, once he has got back his gold from the convent with the help of Abigail and reinstated himself, continues his plotting. His anger at Abigail's conversion causes him to poison the entire convent, which further necessitates the murder of Bernadine, and so he goes on from crime to crime. Regarding this series of crimes, each one to cover up the earlier crime and to maintain power, in The Prince one finds

...the conqueror must arrange to commit all his cruelties at once, so as not to have to recur to them every day ... For injuries should be done all together, so that being less tasted, they will give less offence.⁴⁶

Machiavelli could not have been more consistently neglected than in Barabas' refusal to follow the above precept. The five acts of the drama are tied together on a string of violence and villiary.

In a later chapter (chp. XXI) Machiavelli propounds yet another principle which Marlowe's hero ignores.

A prince is further esteemed when he is a true friend or a true enemy, when, that is, he declares himself without reserve in favour of someone or against another.⁴⁷

Barabas' friendships shift constantly. Even the three representatives of Jewry receive scant sympathy from him. His daughter and Ithamore are the only two he is faithful to, but when he sees that they work to thwart his plans, his feelings change very rapidly. Similarly in his hates he is inconstant. As a good Maltese he should hate Calymath, but he is willing to betray Malta to the Turks. Ferneze had earned his scorn and fury from the start, but Barabas is ready to help Ferneze turn the tables on the victorious Calymath in the last act.

45. Ibid., p. 46.

46. Ibid., p. 99.

47. Ibid., p. 67.

Anyone who began under the banner of Machiavelli and yet was guilty of these cardinal follies in the Machiavellian calendar was automatically doomed to failure.

Further in Chapter XIV one reads -

A prince should therefore have no other aim or thought, nor take up any other thing for his study, but war and its organisation and discipline... the chief cause of the loss of states is the contempt of this art.⁴⁸

Barabas frankly confesses to Ferneze that he is no soldier and throughout the play shows a complete preoccupation with his coffers rather than the military defence of his property or his country. Perhaps this could be accounted for because of his religion as Jews were rarely considered trustworthy enough for military office. Barabas' excessive miserliness is in itself a Machiavellian tenet.

In our times we have seen nothing great done except by those who have been esteemed niggardly; the others have all been ruined.⁴⁹

Marlowe was shrewd enough to realise that if he portrayed Barabas as a flat contradiction of everything in The Prince the point of his story would be lost and the savage humour rendered ineffective. Therefore he permits his protagonist to comply very accurately with certain Machiavellian principles only to break faith in others.

Next one finds that Barabas, rather like his successor Shylock, does not care for his reputation in being considered a cruel man. Both men are more concerned with the fulfilment of their revenges than popular opinion - hence Portia's famous apostrophe to mercy. His greed and anger blind Barabas to the reputation he was acquiring whereas Machiavelli had stated that "every prince must desire to be considered merciful and not cruel".⁵⁰ No matter what one really did,

48. Ibid., p. 73.

49. Ibid., p. 75.

50. Ibid., p. 77.

so long as one was thought to be charitable.

Again in his blind avarice and desire for possessions Barabas forgets what Machiavelli had warned against greed.

Above all he must abstain from taking the property of others, for men forget more easily the death of their father than the loss of their patrimony...One who begins to live by robbing will find some reason for taking the goods of others, whereas causes for taking life are rarer and more fleeting.⁵¹

Barabas forgets the above and boasts to Ithamore

I fill'd the jails with bankrupts in a year,
And with young orphans planted hospitals,
And every moon made some or other mad,
And now and then one hang himself for grief,
Pinning upon his breast a long, great scroll,
How I with interest tormented him.⁵²

Barabas is so greatly incensed at Abigail's apostasy that he tempts Ithamore with the promise of making him his heir if Ithamore would help in the destruction of Abigail.

Now shall thou see the death of Abigail,
That thou may'st freely live to be my heir.⁵³

He pursues this false trail and eventually boasts to Ferneze

...Why, is not this
A kingly kind of trade to purchase 'owns
By treachery, and sell 'em by deceit?⁵⁴

As Machiavelli had predicted, Barabas finds easy excuses for his rapacity. This is a fatal mistake which he finds out too late.

Further in the matter of deliberate deception and double-dealing Barabas has a precedent in Machiavelli.

A prudent ruler ought not to keep faith when by so doing it would be against his interest, and when the reasons that made him bind himself no longer exist... it is necessary to be able to be a great feigner and dissembler ... a new prince being often obliged, in order to maintain

51. Ibid., p. 77.

52. Tucker Brooke ed. The Works of Christopher Marlowe. Clarendon Press, Oxford. 1910. p. 266. l. 958-63.

53. Ibid., p. 277. l. 1365-66.

54. Ibid., p. 304. l. 2329-31.

the state, to act against faith, against charity,
against humanity, and against religion.⁵⁵

Barabas frankly advocates duplicity

As good dissemble that thou never mean'st
As first mean truth, and then dissemble it,
A counterfeit profession is better
Than unseen hypocrisy.⁵⁶

Machiavelli had expressly stated the necessity for this, and for
this he was perhaps best known in sixteenth century Europe.

Everybody sees what you appear to be, few feel what you are,
and those few will not dare oppose themselves to the many,
who have the majesty of the state to defend them; and in the
actions of men... from which there is no appeal, the end
justifies the means.⁵⁷

But if Barabas carefully practiced the last phrase in the above he
forgot that only a "few" are to "feel what you are". However, since
practically all of Malta and all Christendom is only too ready to
believe ill of a Jew it becomes more difficult for Barabas to
dissemble successfully. It is really the Turks whom he plots un-
ashamedly to betray. To be all the more Machiavellian in his success
Barabas should have been more subservient and charitable to win the
trust and confidence of the Maltese. That Barabas had done this is
clear from his own words, but he does not fawn and flatter enough,
nor can he do this convincingly.

We Jews can fawn like spaniels when we please;
And when we grin we bite, yet are our looks
As innocent and harmless as a lamb's.⁵⁸

This would accord with Chapter XIX of The Prince which states

I say that whosoever would study the preceeding argument will
see that either hatred or contempt were the causes of the
ruin of the emperors named.⁵⁹

Barabas is truly Machiavellian in gaining his own ends, but he cannot

55. The Prince. pp. 80-81.

56. Tucker Brooke ed. The Works of Christopher Marlowe. Clarendon
Press, Oxford. 1910. p. 254. l. 529-532.

57. The Prince. p. 81.

58. Tucker Brooke ed. The Works of Christopher Marlowe. Clarendon
Press, Oxford. 1910. p. 261. l. 781-83.

59. The Prince. p. 92.

cloak his deeds with the mask of saintliness which Machiavelli asks. His crimes are all too naked in their brutality.

In examining the personal relationships of Barabas one finds that there too he goes against the principles of Machiavelli. He trusts Ithamore from the very first meeting and opens out the secrets of the past without any reserve. This is very dangerous.

Princes, and specially new ones, have found more faith and more usefulness in those men, whom at the beginning of their power, they regarded with suspicion, than in those they first confided in.⁶⁰

Further, with reference to the advisors of princes one reads - "for men will always be false to you unless they are compelled by necessity to be true".⁶¹ Ithamore from the start is given a free hand with Barabas' house and property, he is promised the entire inheritance, he is the confidant about the criminal past; thus in the Machiavellian sense there is no compulsion for him to be true to his master. In fact he is made almost the equal of Barabas.

Barabas, again, falls in with Machiavellian practice by adapting his tactics to suit the situation.

I also believe that he is happy whose mode of procedure accords with the needs of the times, and similarly he is unfortunate whose mode of procedure is opposed to the times.⁶²

Barabas, like the business magnates of today, had a keen eye for every shift in fortune and could always change positions accordingly. He pretends to become Christian, he feigns friendliness towards Lodowick and Mathias, he changes from a doting father to an avenging fury in his relations with Abigail, and he plays off Turk and Christian against each other - all this to further his own ends. Renaissance times were hard and merciless for all those who could not

60. *The Prince*. p. 75.

61. *Ibid.*, p. 106.

62. *Ibid.*, p. 110.

hold their own against all comers. Barabas' obsession with economic power was a common feature in Tudor England. The contemporary audience applauded many of Barabas' thoughts and actions.

We must not forget the appeal that telling all this wealth would have to an Elizabethan audience, the appeal to cupidity, always a stronger motive than critics have the imagination to realise, although a creative writer like Balzac realised it to the full. At this moment of commercial and oceanic expansion Londoners were particularly open to Barabas' outrageous appeal, the passion for gain, the inordinate desire for the riches of Oriental trade - spur to so many voyages of discovery, the lust for money, the exhibitionism evident in so many aspects of contemporary life, the vast palaces and mansions being built, the bulbous furniture, the opulent carpets and tapestries, the vulgar primary colours, the gorgeous clothes, both men and women glittering with jewels.⁶³

But Barabas overreaches himself as he changes too much and too often. His final mistake was to attempt the betrayal of Calymath to one who had earlier proved himself no friend of Barabas.

This brings one to the final point of reference with Machiavelli, and this is the fulcrum of the play. This factor is the basis on which human relationships are to be established. Machiavelli wrote -

A prince, therefore, who possesses a strong city and does not make himself hated, cannot be assaulted; and if he were to be so, the assailant would be obliged to retire shamefully.⁶⁴

And further

A prince should make himself feared in such a way that if he does not gain love, he at any rate avoids hatred.⁶⁵

This is the root of Barabas' downfall. He is feared and not loved or respected by Maltese or Turk, he is actually hated. He is treated with suspicion and fear on account of his race and his money. This initial handicap was great enough, but Barabas is unwise to add to the hostile feelings against him by plunging into violent crime.

63. Rowse, A.L. Christopher Marlowe. Macmillan and Co., London. 1964. pp. 90-91.

64. The Prince. p. 52.

65. Ibid., p. 76.

By the end of the play he is thoroughly detested by all, including Ithamore for whom Barabas has done so much. But Barabas goes further than only making himself hated.

His cardinal failing is his desire to win the love and affection of those who hate him. Barabas is caught in a strange dichotomy - he spurns the Maltese and yet craves for their affection.

He is conscious of being hated and wants to be loved. To be loved - yes, that desire is his secret shame, the tragic weakness of a character whose wickedness is otherwise unflawed. His hatred is the bravado of the outsider whom nobody loves and his revenges are compensatory efforts to supply people with good reasons for hating him...⁶⁶

Barabas' hunger for love and sympathy is seen throughout. His anger against the three Jews who readily accept Ferneze's harsh conditions is partly due to the fact that they do not support Barabas. He is willing to stand up for the rights of the Jews, but they are not grateful for this gesture. They abandon Barabas in his disaster. Abigail, who is nearest to him in affection, renounces her faith - the dearest possession of any Jew and denounces her own father. Could there be anything more cruel for Barabas? Abigail's alienation was a very bitter blow. One remembers

Oh, my girl,
My gold, my fortune, my felicity,
Strength to my soul, death to mine enemy
Welcome the first beginner of my bliss:
O Abigail, Abigail, that I had these here too,
Then my desires were fully satisfied.⁶⁷

When he is bereft of his daughter he turns to Ithamore for solace.

O Ithamore come near;
Come near, my love, come near thy master's life,
My trusty servant, nay, my second self;
For I have now no hope but even in thee;
An on that hope my happiness is built.⁶⁸

The hankering after Ithamore's sincerity becomes agonisingly

66. Levin, H. *The Overreacher*. Beacon Press, Boston. 1964. p. 78.

67. Tucker Brooke ed. *The Works of Christopher Marlowe*. Clarendon Press, Oxford. 1910. p. 259. l. 688-93.

68. *Ibid.*, p. 276. l. 1315-1319.

pathetic when one notes that Barabas is willing even to buy his love for money. He is desperate and will try anything to gain the love of a single person.

Now thou shalt see the death of Abigail
That thou mayst freely live to be my heir.⁶⁹

How humiliating and painful it must be when one stoops so low for love!

Finally finding even Ithamore false Barabas in desperation seeks the gratitude and charity of the person who had been against him from the start, the person who had had Barabas flung outside the city-walls- "to be a prey for vultures and wild beasts".⁷⁰ He seeks to win the goodwill of Ferneze by betraying Calymath and his army, but here too he is foiled.

When Barabas announces "I'll look unto myself". it is not so much the proclamation of a bold spirit as the cry of despair of the frustrated seeker of human understanding and sympathy.

When everyman looks out for himself alone and looks with suspicion on every other man, the ego is isolated within a vicious circle of mutual distrust.⁷¹

Eventually by adopting the Serpent rather than the Dove out of sheer compulsion Barabas destroys himself.

The devil's disciple Machiavel holds that there is no sin but ignorance, and Machiavel's disciple Barabas, prefers the role of knave to that of fool. Thus in letting the other knaves get the better of him, he commits the only sin in his calendar, the humanistic peccadillo of folly. He acts out the Erasmian object lesson of a scoundrel who is too clever for his own good, the cheater cheated, the wily beguiled.⁷²

In foolishly allowing himself to destroy himself Barabas breaks another Machiavellian precept.

69. Ibid., p. 277. l. 1365-66.

70. Ibid., p. 296. l. 2061.

71. Levin, H. The Overreacher. Beacon Press, Boston. 1964. p. 78.

72. Levin, H. The Overreacher. Beacon Press, Boston. 1964. p. 79.

From this arises the question whether it is better to be loved more than feared, or feared more than loved. The reply is, that one ought to be both feared and loved, but as it is difficult for the two to go together, it is much safer to be feared than loved, if one of the two has to be wanting..... for the friendship which is gained by purchase and not through grandeur and nobility of spirit is bought but not secured; and at a pinch is not to be expended in your service. And men have less scruple in offending one who makes himself loved than one who makes himself feared... but fear is maintained by a dread of punishment which never fails.⁷³

This craving for love on the part of Barabas may be explained by psychology as arising from a deep sense of insecurity created by a variety of factors, not least of them being membership of a despised and under-privileged race. This blinds Barabas to the facts of life and makes him prejudiced - a fatal mistake for a Machiavellian.

How we live is so far removed from how we ought to live, that he who abandons what is done for what ought to be done, will rather learn to bring about his own ruin than his preservation. A man who wishes to make a profession of goodness in everything must necessarily come to grief among so many who are not good.⁷⁴

Barabas could not accurately judge the gulf between the real and ideal worlds. The hypocrisy and treachery of Fernese, the shallow, self-seeking Ithamore and the fragility of Abigail are not recognised by him when he sets out looking for love and understanding, and so he meets the end that Machiavelli predicted for such persons.

Here one finds a whole catalogue of misdeeds according to the precepts of The Prince. This would indicate on the one hand that Marlowe knew the book very well. On the other hand, given this background to the play the irony and satire become all the more caustic. He seems to be challenging the diplomats of his time to achieve perfection in Machiavellian practice and pointing to the ideal Machiavellian by inversion. By showing up the failings of a

73. The Prince. p. 76.

74. Ibid., p. 70.

self-professed Machiavellian Marlowe indicates in negative terms what a true disciple of Machiavelli should be.

The Machiavellian principles depicted here would be all the more readily recognised as they stood in direct contrast to the popular notions of morality. In spite of the break with the Roman Church the average Englishman of the sixteenth century still subscribed very much to the principles of St. Augustine. Augustinian ethics preached an exemplary life on earth to be rewarded by the crown of eternal life in the world to come.

Justice is a virtue distributing unto everyone his due.
Wherefore if man serve not God, what justice can be thought
to be in him?⁷⁵

In the light of the above, Barabas can hardly be considered a just man. In interpreting popular contemporary political theory Marlowe was certainly not fumbling in the dark. He knew very well the precepts of Christian historiography and therefore was aware of painting a heterodox pattern of thought. His audience too would easily recognise a heretical point of view because they tried to approximate to the Augustinian ideal of peace - both worldly and spiritual.

To this end (i.e. peace) he is to avoid molestation by grief, disturbance by desire and dissolution by death and to aim at profitable knowledge, whereunto his actions may be conformable.⁷⁶

Marlowe's interpretation is therefore in accordance with the views of his times. One can clearly see that The Jew of Malta is a drama with more than one level of meaning. It is on the one hand a popular theatrical vehicle to delight the heart of a character-actor, on the other hand it is a popular melodrama supporting the

75. St. Augustine. Civitas Dei xix.21 in Masters of Political Thought. Vol. I. ed. Michael B. Foster. George Harrap and Co., 1942. p. 206.

76. Ibid., xix.14. p. 213.

privileges and socio-ethical notions of the Tudor Establishment. The more sensitive viewer might perhaps have squirmed uncomfortably at the cleverly masked but nonetheless accurate picture of Machiavellianism.

The picture of tragedy as depicted by Marlowe is that of monstrous greed which is self-destructive on the one hand and is imperfectly Machiavellian on the other. Barabas enters the race of life with a handicap because he is a Jew, but he aggravates his position by his blind fury with the world and by his avarice. Marlowe seems to suggest that his revenge and greed could have been fully realised even though they were excessive had he fully adopted Machiavellian tactics without reserve. Another interesting point, raised first by Miss Ellis-Fermor, is that as the play progressed in composition Marlowe began to realise that Machiavelli no matter how efficient was not the ultimate answer to the human predicament. It may assuredly carry man to great heights of success and achievement in most directions, but there were areas of human thought and action where Machiavelli was inapplicable. This area though small, was nonetheless very important.

He (Marlowe) seems to realise early in the play that the Machiavellian interpretation of man leaves out of account those vague, illimitable longings, which deny them as he would, his own experience forced him to accept as an essential part of man. And so, enthusiastically as he adopts it in the beginning, he is aware before the end of its limits.⁷⁷

The spirit of man with its irrational urges and immortal longings was left out by Machiavelli. Shakespeare in depicting Shylock is much more true to the facts of humanity, and that is why Shylock is never ranked with the monsters of drama as Barabas sometimes is.

Finally one cannot neglect to mention certain striking Renaissance overtones in this drama. As has already been mentioned, the

77. Ellis-Fermor, U. Christopher Marlowe. Methuen and Co., London. 1927. p. 102.

cupidity of Barabas was a very common failing of Elizabethan England and Jonson made capital of it in his many satirical comedies. Again the confrontation of the three major religions is significant for Renaissance Europe was convinced of its Christian superiority. The Jews were considered a wilfully blind and depraved race capable of any vice and crime. The Turk was a blasphemous barbarian. In this play Marlowe very clearly points out that there is little to choose between them. Barabas is clearly obsessed with the power of gold, but the others are shown to be equally avaricious.

Gov: Welcome, great Pawshaws, how fares Calymath,
what wind drives you thus into Malta road?

Bash: The wind that bloweth all the world besides,
Desire of gold.⁷⁸

Further Marlowe clearly depicts the background for the religious conflicts of his own times in the clash between Turk, Jew, and Christian. For Marlowe's contemporaries this was all the more pertinent with the fantastic rival claims of Protestant, Catholic and Calvinist, and the religious wars in Western Europe.

We have the feeling that his attitude to Machiavellianism is an ambivalent one: he is too intelligent not to know that wealth and power have often been achieved by the most unscrupulous means, that at the least they necessitate a more than average egoism, the calculated concentration on ends without too much concern for the means employed. Always an element in power, whether political or financial, at all times and in all places, these facts were never more crudely in evidence than in the religious conflicts of the sixteenth century. They were murderous, they provided matter for drama.⁷⁹

Another aspect of the play which was particularly apt for Elizabethan times was the cut-throat competition of a growing commercial society. With the rapid growth in colonies and colonial trade and the explorations in Africa and America, the middle-class

78. Tucker Brooke ed. The Works of Christopher Marlowe. Clarendon Press, Oxford. 1910. p. 279. l. 1420-24.

79. Rowe, A.L. Christopher Marlowe. Macmillan and Co., London, 1964. p. 86.

fighting
was emerging as the most powerful in Tudor England. This class was /
a battle for existence and recognition and each victory was the
result of labour, endeavour and an unyielding temper. This attitude
is brought to the fore very forcefully in the multiple clash of
interests in The Jew of Malta with the victory going to the toughest
and shrewdest.

Barabas is the most successful representative of a
materialist society which also victimises and condemns
him; a society where those in power are hypocrites
and where low life, nasty, brutish and shorter than
usual, thrives on blackmail, prostitution and theft.⁸⁰

Thus Marlowe has also included in his play points of reference
to his own society and its principles. At the same time there is a
hint of earlier times in his portrait of Barabas. There is much of
the grimness and also the comicality of the figure of Vice from the
moralities in the concept of the miserly Jew. The grotesque revenges
and the crooked brain are legacies from medieval drama, as is the
nature of humour in this play. It is to Marlowe's credit that he
successfully juggles all these various strains on thought and
tradition within one character.

Barabas as Jew scorns all Christians, loves only lucre and
in his revenge distorts the retributive justice of the old
law beyond all recognition. As Machiavelli he works by sheer
fraud and strategem, bending all things to obey the laws
of his own ego. In the manner of Vice he takes extraordinary
relish in his deeds of villiany, delighting enormously in
the virtuosity of his evil.⁸¹

This drama, which is perhaps the most controversial of all the
dramas of Marlowe, cannot be dismissed as a grotesque failure.
Theatrically it was one of the greatest successes of its times and
deeply influenced more than one playwright and drama, the most

80. Steane, J.B. Marlowe. Cambridge University Press. 1964. p. 168.

81. Cole, D. Suffering and Evil in the Plays of Christopher Marlowe.
Princeton University Press, N.J. 1962. p. 143.

notable of all being Shakespeare's The Merchant of Venice. This is certainly a play that warrants deep thought and consideration, for in the figure of his protagonist Marlowe has created not only one of the most memorable of all stage figures, but has also said very pertinent things about his own age.

Not only are the deeds of Larabas and their implications valuable for the Elizabethans, but also for us today. We too live in a world of power politics and of gigantic commercial rivalries where the much misunderstood Maltese Jew has significant lessons to teach us. And Marlowe has chosen his historical material and data with great care to interpret the world of realpolitik with amazing insight and accuracy.

CHAPTER VII

THE MASSACRE AT PARIS

This is another of the more controversial and abused of the works of Marlowe. The writing is so uneven, the pace so swiftly irregular and the characterisation so vague that some critics - Miss Ellis-Fermor and J.M. Robertson - have gone so far to suggest that there is another hand in the writing of this drama. Some others suggest that the text as we have it today is an extremely mangled abridgement of the original. Still others feel that we have only a pirated edition of the galley-proofs, or merely the skeleton outline of a play that Marlowe hoped to expand and polish later. Or again, perhaps it was something dashed off to placate an impatient producer who was becoming irascible as the dead-line neared. Whatever the reason may be there can be little doubt that this lurid melodrama is certainly unworthy of the creator of Dr. Faustus or Edward II and totally belies the promise of Tamburlane.

Poirier says - "It is not a play, but rather the framework of a play".¹ Ellis-Fermor writes of it as "a play of lost opportunities".² Bakeless criticises its structure -

The play is obviously badly plotted - indeed, hardly plotted at all, clumsily motivated, and saved from complete dullness by some splendid passage written for the Duke of Guise and by the rush and bustle of the fast-crowding deeds of blood.³

Bakeless further condemns it as "a blood-soaked piece of writing".⁴

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1. Poirier, M. Christopher Marlowe. Chatto and Windus, London. 1951. p. 165.
 2. Ellis-Fermor, U. Christopher Marlowe. Methuen and Co., London. 1927. p. 108.
 3. Bakeless, J. Christopher Marlowe. Jonathan Cape, London. 1938. p. 250.
 4. Ibid., p. 252.

Levin dismisses it as "a singularly crude and unpoetic pot-boiler;"⁵ while Prof. Rowse notes:-

It is the least satisfactory of Marlowe's plays, the most hurried and scamped, and offers the bare text with little of Marlowe's poetry in it.⁶

There appears however little doubt that whatever the motivation or the poverty of literary merit, this was an extremely popular drama in Marlowe's times. Henslowe's diary bears witness to this and to the fact that the profits from this play were £ 2.14 sh. - a very large sum indeed at the Elizabethan box-office. The political rivalry with France and the recurrent upsurges of anti-Roman Catholic feeling coupled with patriotic Protestantism made this play a popular one.

Scholars and critics have compiled a neat list of the possible source materials for this play. For the first part most of the material came from Jean de Berres, The Three Parties of Commentaries containing the Whole and Perfect Discourse of the Civil Warres of Fraunce, chiefly Book X. This had been translated into English by Francis Hotman in 1574. The Life of Coligny was another valuable source and was translated in 1576. The former seems to have been a popular work because four successive Latin and English versions are to be found 1570-74. The episode of the murder of Ramus may be traced to the Protestant pamphlet, Le Tocsin contre les Massacreurs. For events after the coronation of Henry III it would appear that Marlowe relied on contemporary gossip and rumour, the broadsides which served the Elizabethans for newspapers and perhaps on information direct from the Walsinghams. Francis Walsingham had been ambassador in Paris at the time of the St. Bartholomew Massacre.

5. Levin, H. The Overreacher. Faxon Press, Boston. 1964. p. 84.

6. Rowse, A.L. Christopher Marlowe. Macmillan and Co., London. 1964. p. 100.

On his way to France in the last days of the year 1570, the sober-minded but highly intelligent ambassador had called on Admiral Coligny's brother, the Huguenot Cardinal Chatillion, at Canterbury...During the next year in France we find Walsingham busily engaged, and, from the laconic diary he left, meeting everybody of political importance except the Guise leaders, who were enemies of England. Walsingham kept closely in touch with Huguenot leaders... and at the end of the year the philosopher Ramus paid Walsingham two visits... All the Walsingham circle kept close touch with developments in France. Only someone intimately acquainted with them would know the court gossip about Henri III's mignon Epemon cuckolding the great Duke of Guise with his Duchess.⁷

Further, as is sometimes conjectured, if Marlowe was one of Walsingham's agents in France, his interest in and knowledge of affairs in Paris would be considerable. France being such a near and persistent rival England could not afford to ignore or neglect the changes of fortune at the Louvre.

Kocher has made an impressive list of pamphlets, tracts and news-sheets circulating from hand to hand in Elizabethan London which Marlowe could have consulted. Most important amongst these is the Roman Catholic manuscript - Le Martire des Deux Freres which deals with the death of the Guise and his brother, the Cardinal, and also makes open allusions to the king's minions. Among the other pamphlets, both French and English, mentioned by Kocher are La Vie et Faits Notables de Henri de Valois (Paris 1589); The True History of the Civill Warres of France (London 1591); A Discourse upon the Present Estate of France (London 1588) and Martine Marsixtus (London 1591). Of Marlowe's treatment of these materials more will be noted later in this chapter.

This play, despite its kaleidoscopic view of history, has been taken as an expression of Marlowe's attitude towards Machiavellian politics. In the Prologue to The Jew of Malta the Guise is

7. Ibid., p. 102-3.

explicitly mentioned as a symbol of Machiavellianism.

Albeit the world think Machiavelli is dead
Yet was his soul but flown beyond the Alps
And now the Guise is dead, is come from France
To view this land and frolic with his friends.⁸

Marlowe's reading and understanding of Machiavelli has already been discussed in the earlier chapter. The purpose here is to examine the extent to which the Duke of Guise measures up to his Italian model. The most obvious point of reference is the theme of the aspiring mind. In The Prince Machiavelli had extolled the virtues of men like Caesar Borgia, Agathocles and Severus who rose from comparative obscurity to the highest positions in their respective lands by dint of labour, cunning, ambition and self-confidence. The Duke of Guise in his opening speech aligns himself with such men.

What glory is there in a common good
That hangs for every peasant to achieve?
That like I best that flies beyond my reach.⁹

The Guise despises religion, the king, the power of the Queen mother. He sees all these as trifles that must give way before his aspirations. However, unlike Barabas who gloats over the means he employs, the Guise has both eyes fixed on his end and cares little for the means he employs. He looks upon the means as necessary expediences which he is obliged to accept and use.

Further Guise does not speculate or even sermonise very much about the basic principles of his life on which he bases his acts. He is too busy doing and achieving, too preoccupied with planning coups to pause to examine his motivations. He keeps before him only two ideals - the paramountcy of the Roman Church and his personal

8. Tucker Brooke ed. The Works of Christopher Marlowe. Clarendon Press, Oxford. 1910. p. 241. l. 1-4.

9. Ibid., p. 448. l. 97-99.

advancement. Each one of these ideals helps and promotes the other.

Since thou hast all the cards within thy hands
To shuffle or cut, take this as surest thing:
That right or wrong, thou deal thyself a king.¹⁰

Machiavelli in action rather than thought - such is the Guise.

In The Prince one finds several statements which bring to mind the actions of the Duke of Guise.

Still the experience of our times show those princes to have done great things who have had little regard for good faith, and have been able by astuteness to confuse men's brains, and who have ultimately overcome those who have made loyalty their foundation.¹¹

Further Machiavelli allows that a prince in the process of establishing himself is "often obliged, in order to maintain the state, to act against faith, against charity, against humanity and against religion".¹²

In The Discourses on Livy one notes

Where it is an absolute question of the welfare of our country we must admit of no considerations of justice or injustice, of mercy or cruelty, of praise or ignominy, but putting all else aside we must adopt whatever course will save the nation's existence and liberty.¹³

What other reason does Catherine give for the massacre of the Huguenots than the above? The fact that she too was an Italian helped Marlowe to identify her with Machiavelli. She aided and abetted the Guise in his blood-thirsty schemes against the Huguenots and persuaded her son Charles IX to give his consent to their plans. When the king was shocked and alarmed at the attack on Coligny she advised him to visit the wounded admiral thus

Your Majesty were best go visit him
And make a show as if all were well.¹⁴

10. Ibid., p. 449. l. 146-48.

11. Machiavelli, N. The Prince. Chp. XVIII. p. 79.

12. Ibid., p. 81.

13. Machiavelli, N. The Discourses. III.41. in Will Durant The Renaissance. Simon and Schuster, N.Y. 1943. p. 239.

14. Tucker Brooke ed. The Works of Christopher Marlowe. Clarendon Press, Oxford. 1910. p. 452. l. 263-4.

However all the acts of Guise are not so reprehensible as they might appear. In the last chapter of The Prince Machiavelli makes an impassioned appeal for the unification of Italy. Political division and military incapacity were also the lot of France and Guise, like Machiavelli, realised how fatal this could be for his country. Spain, England and Austria were powerful rivals and only a strong France with centralised power could emerge successful against her enemies.

The all important thing was the establishment of the national state. Both the form which it should take and the means by which it should be established were secondary concerns.¹⁵

Another factor that undermined national unity as understood by Machiavelli was the reliance upon foreign mercenaries.

The mercenaries and auxiliaries are useless and dangerous, and if any one supports his state by the arms of mercenaries he will never stand firm or sure, as they are disunited, ambitious, without discipline, faithless, bold amongst friends, cowardly amongst enemies, they have no fear of God, and keep no faith with men.¹⁶

The Guise also wanted a strong military force united on grounds of a common faith and nationality. Henry of Navarre was neither a Papist nor a true Frenchman, as Navarre is geographically, racially, linguistically and sociologically more akin to Spain than France.

The Guise persuaded Charles to consent to the massacre in these words.

And rather choose to seek your country's good
Than pity and relieve these upstart heretics.¹⁷

One must remember that in Marlowe's lifetime men like Purghey, Knollys, Walsingham and Leicester were building a strong and unified England on exactly the same principles as the Guise was following

15. Hearnshaw, F.J.C. Social and Political Ideas of the Renaissance and Reformation. Barnes and Noble, N.Y. 1949. p. 113.

16. The Prince. p. 57.

17. Tucker Brooks ed. The Works of Christopher Marlowe. Clarendon Press, Oxford. 1910. p. 451. l. 225-6.

in France. Perhaps Marlowe could not resist this sly hit at his own national politicians who loathed Guise and all he stood for, but in their actions followed his lead very closely.

When one comes to examine Marlowe's treatment of his source material one finds uppermost in his writing a blatant nationalism, political and religious. All things English and Protestant are thoroughly endorsed. In reviewing this one must always keep in mind the Act of Settlement 1571 which proclaimed unconditional loyalty to the Queen.

It was declared high treason to affirm that Elizabeth was not, or might not be, queen; or that she was a heretic, schismatic or a usurper. The Act emphasised that the Pope's bid to recover the English Catholics was an attempt to destroy their natural allegiance, to create sedition and to plot the overthrow of the realm.¹⁸

This complete support of the Queen meant complete support of the Church of England and vice versa.

The Reformation and the establishment of the Tudor dynasty had served to cut England off from Europe and to give it a more distinct personality than ever before. Since political and religious enmity coincided the role of both, the Anglican Church and the Anglican kingdom became vitally important for the survival and growth of the Protestant cause. Henry VIII had merely declared himself the supreme head of the Church in England, not of the church. However during the regency of Somerset and Northumberland the Protestant cause was firmly implanted on British soil and many Protestant preachers and refugees were given a cordial welcome at the centres of learning in England.

Protestant zealots, hitherto restrained by their wholesome fear of Henry poured into the country from abroad,

18. Reese, M.M. The Tudors and Stuarts. Edward Arnold, London. 1940. p. 142.

not Lutherans only but apostles of a harsher creed, the envoys sent by Calvin from Geneva. During Edward's short reign foreign divines and foreign congregations won a remarkable hold on England. The Italian Peter Martyr was Professor of Divinity at Oxford; Martin Lacer at Cambridge, although he could speak no English, John a Lasco, a fugitive from Poland, was pastor of the foreign community in London, a German Paul Fagus was reader of Hebrew at Cambridge; there were congregations of French speaking Wallons at Canterbury and Glastonbury.¹⁹

The fact that Canterbury gave shelter to dissident Frenchmen is significant as it was the early home of Marlowe. Further Cambridge was always associated with the Protestant cause rather than Oxford till as late as the nineteenth century. Most Elizabethan Puritans were from Cambridge - Travers, Browne, Marrow, Walsingham, Greenwood, Penry and Udall. Most bishops with Calvinist leanings were also from Marlowe's alma mater- Young, Cox, Pilkington, Horne and Grindall. The powerful Earl of Leicester had been the patron of Cartwright, while Walsingham, Knollys and Sir Walter Mildmay, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, initiated Parliamentary action to modify the Prayer Book along more definite Protestant lines. The most vocal of all the early Puritans, Peter Wentworth, was a near relation of the Walsinghams. Marlowe, one knows, was an intimate of the Walsingham household and may even have been in the employ of Sir Francis to counter the Catholic espionage.

The Roman Catholics both in England and abroad were always suspect as they held beliefs contrary to that of the established state but also due to these beliefs they were allied to the enemies of the state. In 1559 the Act of Supremacy made Elizabeth the "Supreme Gouvernor" within England of all matters spiritual, ecclesiastical and temporal. An oath to this effect was compulsory for all clergy, government officers, lawyers, schoolmasters and

19. Ibid., p. 79.

members of Parliament. The Pope counteracted by a Bull of Excommunication - "A Sentence Declaratory against Elizabeth, the pretended Queen of England, and those heretics adhering to her". All such "incurred the Sentence of Anathema and are cut off from the Unity of the Body of Christ". Parliament again affirmed its stand by the queen and the Anglican Church in 1571. In 1580 Edward Campion headed the first Jesuit mission to England. This was part of the campaign for regaining England for Rome. Pope Gregory XIII imprudently patronised the Spanish attack on Ireland and assured the English Roman Catholics that assassination was no sin and granted a plenary indulgence to any who removed "that guilty woman of England". This inspired many to attempt it and many answered with their lives e.g. Parsons and Richard Garnett. Thus the Church of Rome had alienated the English.

They cast aside the moral weapon, the only one that the best Catholics would use, and sank to violence and conspiracy. As a result of their efforts the cause of Catholicism was for more than a hundred years identified with intrigue and assassination.²⁰

The memory of Mary Tudor's Bloody reign was fresh in Elizabethan minds. Her marriage to their greatest political enemy, Philip of Spain, had served to antagonise patriotic Anglicans further. Mary, Queen of Scots had been a focal point for treason and insurrection. These plots were on the surface prompted by religion - planting a true Catholic queen in place of a heretic Protestant one - but France took an active share in them for clearly political considerations. Finally in 1585 Parliament banished all Jesuits and seminary-priests on pain of death. In 1587 yielding to political considerations Elizabeth signed the order for the execution of Mary, Queen of Scots. The English suspicion of the Roman Church had resulted

20. Ibid., p. 144.

in complete loathing. This strong antagonism was fostered by the political rivalry with France and Spain. By the close of the sixteenth century the Reformation had assumed a very strong political complexion and church loyalties were a prime factor in determining the balance of power in Europe.

Marlowe lived in these troubled times and his early training and study had enabled him to appreciate both the religious as well as the political aspects of the European scene.. He also realised that Elizabeth and her Protestant settlement were symbols of English independence. For England to be safe the Reformation had to survive the attacks of Rome. Marlowe must have been aware of the bloody and costly civil wars over religion in Europe and naturally wanted that his homeland should not be torn asunder as many nations on the continent had been. This play brings out very clearly the value of the English Church and its unquestionable validity and at the same time depicts the horrors of religious strife in France.

The history of the fortunes of the House of Valois and the Huguenots in France is one series of confusion, attack and counter-attack, murder, riot and massacre. From 1562 till 1572 the wars of religion had divided and impoverished France. These began with the massacre of the Huguenots by Guise at Vassy and ended with the bloodbath on St. Bartholomew's Eve. Not only was France divided by religion but the crown itself was weak. Three powerful families contested for supreme power and brought ruin on all, including themselves, in their struggle. These were the Bourbons, the Guises and the Montmorency's. The Queen Mother, Catherine de Medici, during the reigns of her three sons tried to break the power of these cliques and to centralise authority in the person of the king. In doing this she allowed no considerations of justice or humanity

to stand in her way and thereby earned for herself the notoriety she then enjoyed.

Her concern was for her house, her adopted country, and not least for herself, for she relished the power denied to her during the reigns of her husband and her elder son. Catherine desired peace within and without. She sought to avert the imminent civil war between the rival factions now allied with rival houses of the nobility. She desired also to avoid war with Spain and England. To these ends she endeavoured to pit the confessions and the houses against each other.²¹

Marlowe was perhaps too close in time to these events and not sufficiently informed to appreciate the national and nobler motives of Catherine. For him, as for his contemporaries, she symbolised the most depraved aspects of both Catholicism and Machiavellianism. In the play therefore she is shown up in a very poor light. She is seen as a woman who can even will the death of her own son to serve the ends of her ambition and her faith.

And if he do deny what I do say,
I'll dispatch him with his brother presently,
And then shall Monsieur wear the diadem:
Tush, all shall die unless I have my will,
For whiles she lives Katherine will be Queen.²²

And again when Henry III joyfully tells her of the murder of the Guise she abuses him rather than condones. Marlowe represents her doing this out of a sense of frustrated Catholicism. The national calamity inherent in the death of Guise is mentioned but not explained.

I cannot speak for grief; when thou wast born,
I would that I had murdered thee, my son.
My son? thou art a changeling, not my son.
I curse thee and exclaim thee miscreant,
Traitor to God, and to the realm of France.²³

The calamity to Catholicism, which for Marlowe and England was a

21. Bainton, Roland H. The Reformation of the Sixteenth Century. Beacon Press, Boston. 1952. p. 167.

22. Brooke ed. The Works of Christopher Marlowe. Clarendon Press, Oxford. 1910. p. 464. l. 655-59.

23. Ibid., p. 477. l. 1084-88.

false faith, was the main cause of her grief.

To whom shall I bewray my secrets now,
Or who will help to build Religion?
The Protestants will glory and insult,
Wicked Navarre will get the crown of France,
The Popedom cannot stand, all goes to wrack.²⁴

Her share in the massacre is shown to be cunning and deceitful in the truest traditions of "Machiavel". Modern scholarship has now absolved her of most of the crimes that were associated with her name.

She bore no hatred for Protestants, and had no prejudice against anybody. She wanted peace, the safeguard at all costs of the monarchy's prerogatives and of her children's inheritance; to defend her position she allowed herself to be troubled neither by sentiment nor scruple. Very broad in matters of belief, but severe towards rebellion she took constant care to preserve the unity of the realm and to spare the "poor subjects".²⁵

Of all the problems before Catherine the most pressing and difficult was to break the power of the nobility. Amongst these the most powerful was the House of Guise. The mother of Mary, Queen of Scots and widow of James V of Scotland was Mary Guise. Thus Mary posed a religious and political danger to Elizabethan England. Mary Guise had been regent during the minority of her daughter. The father of Mary Guise had been a national hero having recovered Calais from the English. One of the brothers of Mary Guise was a cardinal and the other, Marlowe's protagonist, was the Leader of the Catholic party at court. This family wanted for France exactly what Elizabeth did for England, a strong united nation on the basis of a common faith.

The family (Guise) was ardently convinced that the security of France rested on the maintenance of the Catholic faith... The Guises were perfectly prepared, if need be, even to set aside the succession and make themselves masters of France

24. Ibid., p. 477. l. 1095-99.

25. Renier, Lucien. A History of France. Macmillan and Co., London. 1953. p. 212.

in order to prevent a Protestant from coming to the throne. Such readiness to supplant the ruling house and dismember France enabled the Huguenots to pose as patriots and loyalists commissioned to deliver the king from the domination of a faction.²⁶

This overweening ambition, personal and religious, is amply shown by Marlowe in the most pejorative terms. A fine example of this is the opening speech of the Guise.

But first lets follow those in France,
That hinder our possession of the crown:
As Ceasar to his soldiers, so say I:
Those that hate me I will learn to loath...
The plot is laid, and things shall come to pass,
Where resolution strives for victory.²⁷

Thus Guise becomes the villain of the piece. He was even prepared to overthrow the king if he met with royal opposition, and this was an unforgiveable crime in the eyes of Tudor England. Further being a Papist he became a political and religious enemy of England. In this picture of the Guise Marlowe is basically in accordance with the facts of history.

The party of the Guises...they not only planned and approved of the massacre, but actually executed it: they stand out as representatives of that fierce spirit which characterises the temper of those who fought on behalf of the Catholic reaction. Their stem-principle was coercion, the Inquisition, or the assassin's knife, or any form of terrorism, seemed to them not only allowable but natural. They dabbled in murders; the chronicle of the years before the St. Bartholomew massacre is filled with acts of violence done by their agency; the massacre itself was but a larger and shining illustration of their principles.²⁸

All this chicanery and deceit culminated in the holocaust on August 23, 1572. Before that the Queen of Navarre had died under suspicious circumstances, and though the inquest revealed a fatal lung infection the story that she was poisoned by the Roman Catholics

26. Bainton, Roland. The Reformation of the Sixteenth Century. Beacon Press, Boston. 1952. p. 165.

27. Tucker Brooks ed. The Works of Christopher Marlowe. Clarendon Press, Oxford. 1910. p. 449. l. 155-166.

28. Kitchin, G.W. A History of France. Clarendon Press, Oxford. 1906. p. 359.

was widespread. There was an attempt on Coligny's life. Marlowe ignores, or perhaps was ignorant of the fact, that Coligny was pressuring the king towards an open war with Spain. This was distasteful to Catherine as she wanted peace with so powerful a co-religionist. It was this that urged her to remove Coligny from her path. Marlowe depicts the attempted murder of the admiral as an example of Catholic perfidy and an attack on the Protestants. The Huguenot outcry against this attack on their champion frightened the king into the Catholic camp and he gave his consent to the massacre. Between 1 and 2 a.m. on Sunday morning a bell rang from the steeple of St. Germain -l'Auxerrois and this signalled the start of the massacre. It is difficult to estimate the number of victims, but most historians are agreed that nearly ten thousand fell in Paris alone and almost the same number were killed in the provinces. This deed was all the more evil as the Huguenots had flocked to Paris to attend the marriage of their king. With all of England Marlowe must have been shocked at the event and must have known of the official court mourning declared by Elizabeth for the slaughtered Huguenots. English repugnance of the deed was heightened by the issue of the special medal struck by the Pope applauding the action of his followers.

Marlowe has deliberately introduced the murder of Ramus into the play. Ramus stood for modern thought and philosophy of the kind prevalent at Cambridge. Ramus was studied and much admired at Cambridge and his bold challenge of the old order must have appealed to Marlowe's impatient questioning spirit. The murder of Ramus meant an attack on the modern Protestant spirit by reactionary forces.

The constant conflicts and bloodshed that resulted from the

religious controversies of the time must have made a deep impression on Marlowe. Aside from well-known men like Luther, Calvin, Zwingli and Erasmus there were the native disputants, Knox in Scotland, Cranmer and Tyndale at home, to say nothing of the writings of Martin Marprelate. These men had made explicit the necessity of Protestantism and had allied this movement to the humanist and nationalist zeal that was sweeping through Europe. Given his background and his genius Marlowe could not but share their beliefs and convictions - religious and political.

In the text one finds several references to the wicked French Catholics preparing and plotting the destruction of God's true church and country - England. Guise opens with a list of his adherents.

Paris hath full five hundred colleges,
As monasteries, priories, abbeys and halls,
Wherein are thirty thousand able men,
Besides a thousand sturdy student Catholics,
And more, of my knowledge in one cloister keeps
Five hundred fat Franciscan friars and priests -
All this and more, if more may be comprised,
To bring the will of our desires to end.²⁹

At the time of the massacre Guise sounds his hunting cry when the Huguenots plead for mercy.

No villian, that tongue of thine
That hath blasphemed the Holy Church of Rome,
Shall drive no plaints into the Guise's ears;
To make the justice of my heart relent:
Tut, tut, tut, let none escape:
So, drag them away.³⁰

So drunk with power is the Guise that he flaunts his ambitions in the face of the king himself.

My Lord, to speak more plainly, it is thus:
Being animated by religious zeal,

29. Tucker Brooke ed. The Works of Christopher Marlowe. Clarendon Press, Oxford. 1910. p. 449. l. 137-144.

30. Ibid., p. 461. l. 535-540.

I mean to muster all the power I can
To overthrow these sexious Puritans:
And I know my Lord, the Pope will sell his triple crown
Aye, and the catholic Philip, King of Spain,
Ere I shall want, will cause his Indians
To rip the golden bowels of America.³¹

Marlowe has also introduced bitter comments on the Catholic faith. Seroune is murdered because he calls direct on Christ which Catholics are not supposed to do.

Why darrest thou presume to call on Christ
Without the intercession of some saint?³²

Nothing could be calculated to win the support of a Protestant audience more than this. Luther had indicted the Roman Church for the excessive importance given to saints and Calvinists looked upon anything but direct access to God with holy horror.

An even more caustic comment is made when Duke Dumaïne consults Jacques Clement about revenging the death of his brother, Duke of Guise. The friar sets aside Dumaïne's scruples by allowing that "the deed is meritorious".³³ This echoes the Pope's declaration that the murder of Elizabeth by Catholics would be a meritorious deed and not a sin. This comment must have aroused popular indignation against the unscrupulous methods of Machiavelli adopted by the Counter-Reformation.

On the other hand Marlowe loses no opportunity to praise the Huguenots, their leader and their achievements. The end of his play is patently artificial - more so because of the appeal made by the dying Henry to Elizabeth who becomes the symbol of true religion.

Guise who champions the Catholic cause at the very outset indicates that religion holds no intrinsic value for him. It is merely a tool he uses to gain his private ends.

31. Ibid., p. 470. l. 854-861.

32. Ibid., p. 455. l. 360-61.

33. Ibid., p. 478. l. 1147.

My policy hath framed religion.
Religion: O Diabole.
Fye, I am ashamed, however I seem,
To think a word of such a simple sound
Of so great matter should be made the ground.³⁴

So the Roman Catholics are exposed as religious opportunists, having no true religion in them. Levin has pointed out that a popular Tudor notion was that Catholics were really atheists using a religious camouflage for reasons of policy. The obvious inference being that the Church of England was free from such base subterfuge.

Marlowe loses no opportunity in praising the virtues of true religion. This is done in two ways; by protesting the merits of Protestantism and by vilifying its enemies, chiefly the Pope.

After the death of Charles Queen Catherine sent for Henry from Poland to be king after his brother. Navarre protests the justice of his claim, which is the true Protestant cause

But God that always doth defend the right
Will show His mercy and preserve us still.³⁵

A few lines later the Huguenot Pleshe encourages Navarre in this action.

Pleshe: The virtues of our true religion
Cannot but march with many graces more:
Whose army shall discomfit all your foes,
And at the length in Pampelonia crown
In spite of Spain and all the popish power,
That holds it from your highness wrongfully:
Your Majesty, her rightful Lord and Sovereign.

Henry: Truth Pleshe, and God so prosper me in all,
As I intend to labour for the truth,
And true profession of His holy word.³⁶

Later when Navarre proclaims his cause as a "quarrel just and right" taken up "in honour of our God", another Huguenot says -

Then in this bloody brunt they may behold
The sole endeavour of your princely care,
To plant the true succession of your faith.³⁷

34. Ibid., p. 448. l. 122-26.
35. Ibid., p. 462. l. 580-81.
36. Ibid., p. 462. l. 582-591.
37. Ibid., p. 466. l. 719-721.

This constant insistence upon the truth of the Huguenot faith cannot have been misunderstood by Marlowe's audience who were all loyal Englishmen pledged to defend their Queen from Catholic plots and their country from Catholic domination. The constant proclamation of the validity of their creed - religious and political - had propaganda value that Marlowe was astute enough to draw upon.

Vilification of the Roman Catholics is scattered throughout the play. A few examples will suffice to indicate Anglican indignation. When Admiral Coligny had been murdered in his bed Anjou exclaims:-

Away with him, cut off his head and hands,
And send them for a present to the Pope:
And when this just revenge is finished,
Unto mount Faucon shall we drag his corpse.³⁸

Navarre accuses Guise of plotting against France exactly what was being plotted against England.

That wicked Guise I fear me much will be
The ruin of that famous realm of France:
For his aspiring thoughts aim at the crown,
And takes his vantage on Religion,
To plant the Pope and popelings in the realm,
And bind it wholly to the See of Rome.³⁹

References to the sovereign virtues of Elizabeth and her country are deliberately introduced to further spotlight the villiany of those who wished for her downfall. One of the crimes of Guise mentioned by Henry III.

Did he not draw a sort of English priests
From Douai to the seminary at Rheims,
To hatch forth treason 'gainst their natural Queen?
Did he not cause the King of Spain's huge fleet
To threaten England and to menace me?⁴⁰

The dying Henry expresses his love and respect for England. This of course is historically inaccurate and dramatically unnatural, but

38. Ibid., p. 454. l. 320-23.

39. Ibid., p. 472. l. 928-933.

40. Ibid., p. 475-6. l. 1042-1046.

it admirably suited Marlowe's purpose of supporting the Tudor dynasty.

Navarre, give me thy hand, I here do swear
To ruinate that wicked Church of Rome
That hatcheth up such bloody practices,
And here protest eternal love to thee,
And to the Queen of England specially,
Whom God hath blessed for hating popery.⁴¹

Keeping this propagandist end in view Marlowe has distorted history. Whether he did this deliberately for dramatic or political purposes, or whether he was not in possession of all the facts cannot definitely be ascertained. It is certain that anti-France and anti-Catholic rumour was rife in Elizabethan times. Marlowe's play is almost cinematographic in its swift review of French history and such a rapid survey always lends itself to oversimplification and distortion of the truth. He carefully picked out those events which showed up the Guise party in the poorest light - the mysterious death of the Queen of Navarre, the Guise wanting a great Catholic league supported by Spain and Rome, the cuckolding of Guise by Mugerone and the despicable character of Henry III's murderer

Jacques Clement, a half-witted creature, a jest to his friends, a Dominican friar lately made priest, a man of a type of character not rarely found in the days of high religious excitement, the hanger-on and enthusiastic instrument of a determined and fanatical party...grew daily more eager to rid the world of a hated king.⁴²

What Marlowe did not include in his play were the efforts of Queen Catherine to consolidate royal power and to avoid open war with either England or Spain (the Duke of Anjou was for a while a serious suitor for the hand of Queen Elizabeth and spent several months with her in London); Marlowe ignored the fact that the Guise first wooed Marguerite de Valois and when this infuriated her brother Charles IX

41. Ibid., p. 481. l. 1216-1221.

42. Kitchin, C.W. A History of France. Clarendon Press, Oxford. 1906. p. 396.

she was married to Henry of Navarre. Marlowe could have shown the rivalry in love as well as in religion between Guise and Navarre, or used this as extenuating circumstances for the infidelity of the Duchess of Guise, but he did not do so. Perhaps he did not partly because romantic and emotional matters of such a nature held little interest for him, and partly because the main implication of the play was political and not human. Again the better part of a year elapsed between the death of the Guise and that of Henry III, but Marlowe telescopes both events. The most conspicuous departure from history is the dying speech of Henry III and his great appeal to England - nothing could be further from the mind of any sixteenth century Frenchman. Marlowe adroitly closes his drama with the end of the Valois dynasty with the crown falling to Navarre who is throughout the symbol of true religion. The triumph of the Protestant and pro-English cause is uppermost. Marlowe must have been aware of how little his faith meant to Navarre when political gains were at stake, of his joining the Roman Church with the flippant remark that Paris was well worth a mass. But as this would have impaired the image of virtuous Protestantism Marlowe left it out.

The medieval concept of tragedy is alluded to at a few places, and yet the theme of the fall of a great man from a position of importance is not fully worked out. Guise does refer to himself as Caesar when warned of the waiting murderers. This line is said to have been echoed by Shakespeare in his writing of Julius Caesar

Yet Caesar shall go forth.
Let mean consails and baser men fear death,
But they are peasants, I am Duke of Guise.⁴³

Henry III refers to Guise as "surcharged with surfeit of

43. Tucker Brooke ed. The Works of Christopher Marlowe. Clarendon Press, Oxford. 1910. p. 474. l. 1005-07.

ambitious thoughts"⁴⁴ However there can be little doubt that aside from all its merits as a commercial pot-boiler The Massacre at Paris is preminently a propaganda play. Henderson suggests why this should be so.

It dealt with events that were still in the news and, doubtless, provided a useful testimony to its author's patriotic Protestantism and loyalty at a time when they were being rather more than questioned among his friends.⁴⁵

When Kyd was arrested on May 12, 1593 there were found in his room certain papers containing heretical opinions, which under torture Kyd confessed as belonging to Marlowe. These, he said, had got mixed with his own papers while they had been sharing the same lodgings. Charges of "atheism" against Marlowe were many, chiefly the Baines Note, so Henderson's reasoning cannot be dismissed out of hand.

There can be little reason to question the pro-Tudor propaganda of this play. One notes that the entire series of Shakespeare's histories have exactly the same moral viz. support of the ruling dynasty and the sanctity of the monarch and his ways. Marlowe took great pains to deliberately introduce proofs for the validity of the Protestant cause. By doing this he was only supporting his Queen as the rightful political and religious ruler of England. There was a good^{deal} of unrest in the country at the end of the century- Spain though defeated by the scattering of the Armada was by no means crushed, France was a nearer foe and the Pope was always encouraging the English Catholics to revolt. The question of the succession was a gnawing one and Catholic claimants were not wanting. Further the Church of England was as yet a fledgling church and had to be defended from attacks from both Geneva and Rome. The young

44. Ibid., p. 473. l. 960.

45. Henderson, P. Christopher Marlowe. Longmans, Green and Co., London, 1952. p. 111.

church could never have too many vocal and eloquent defenders.

Calvin had urged a violent defence of Protestantism.

When the Papists are so harsh and violent in defence of their superstitions that they rage cruelly to shed innocent blood, are not Christian magistrates ashamed to show themselves less ardent in defence of the sure truth?⁴⁶

_____Correspondence. Sept. 9, 1553.

Marlowe does defend his truth most ardently in this play, but he tends more to agree with Luther who had condemned the use of force by the Church to gather adherents.

But the thoughts and meanings of the soul can be manifest to none but God. Therefore it is futile and impossible to command or to force any man to believe this or that...Heresy can never be contained by force. God's word must be fighting here; and if that avail not, then will it remain unchecked by temporal authorities, though they fill the world with blood. Heresy is a spiritual thing, cut with no iron, burned with no fire, drowned with no water... Though we should burn every Jew and heretic by force, yet neither were there, nor will there be one conquered or converted thereby.⁴⁷

_____Von Weltlicher Uberkeyt.

Marlowe's inherent humanism drew him naturally towards Luther and so he condemned the bloodshed and violence employed by the Guise and Queen Catherine to achieve a totally Catholic France. Perhaps he was also expressing the regretful horror that was felt by his contemporaries at the fanatical deeds of Mary Tudor in her attempt to bring England back within the fold of Rome. He seems to suggest that it is far better to allow and respect the sovereign independence of England, and all the more so because true religion resided there. So Navarre declares:-

But God we know will always put them down
That lift themselves against the perfect truth,

46. Calvin, J. Correspondence. in F.J.C.Hearnshaw Social and Political Ideas of the Renaissance and Reformation. Parnes and Noble, N.Y. 1949. p. 211.

47. Luther, M. Von Weltlicher Uberkeyt. in F.J.C.Hearnshaw Social and Political Ideas of the Renaissance and Reformation. Parnes and Noble, N.Y. 1949. p. 186.

Which I'll maintain so long as life doth last,
And with the Queen of England join my force
To beat the papal monarch from our lands,
And keep those relics from our country's coasts.⁴⁸

Such sentiments were not only sound Tudor politics but were also certain to be extremely popular with an audience in whom the flame of religious and political nationalism had but recently been set ablaze.

48. Tucker Brooke ed. The Works of Christopher Marlowe. Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1910. p. 469. l. 804-809.

CHAPTER VIII

EDWARD II

All scholars and critics are agreed that this is chronologically the last and finest play of Marlowe's, and thus they all regret the untimely end of perhaps the most promising figure in all English literature. The play was written most probably in 1591-92 before the closure of the London theatres due to the plague epidemic. The play is entered for publication in the Stationer's Register on July 6, 1593. One remembers that Marlowe met his premature death on May 30, 1593 at Deptford Strand.

Marlowe, in this play, had certainly come a long way from the crude pageantry of Tamberlane and the adolescent outpourings of Dido. There is a much greater control of the "mighty line", the bombast and sonority are kept in check while the tautness and tension of the pithy statement is much more in evidence. There is also a much maturer and deeper insight into character and motivation. The static figures of Tamberlane are gone and there is a credible and honest development of character and action from scene to scene. History is viewed along contemporary humanist lines rather than the substantialism of the classicist. Edward is a more human and sympathetic person than any of Marlowe's other protagonists. One feels a closer and easier identity with Edward than with Tamberlane, Barabas or even Faustus. And though Marlowe's finest dramatic work enjoyed a very brief theatrical life, there can be little doubt that this play had a very great influence on the writers of histories that followed after. The most conspicuous debt being that of Shakespeare's in Richard II.

Thus one must agree with Prof. Bakeless in his comment that this is the "most perfectly planned, most perfectly finished and most

perfectly preserved"1 of all the plays of Marlowe. Charles Lamb said that the scene of Edward's murder would move pity and terror more than any other scene in any play which he had read.

It is evident that Marlowe was developing very rapidly, both technically and in the more important senses. It might even be hazarded that he was developing a more "Shakespearean" (that is, a more inclusive) style, for in Edward II there can be found the most formalised qualities of feeling, and the most naturally human.2

Poirier remarks:-

In actual fact, if judged according to the usual standards, it is certainly the most successful one (drama) he wrote. Better built than the others, it also evinces a more perfect harmony between the characters and the action; it stands closer to the Shakespearean conception of the chronicle play...it proves that Marlowe was not a pure lyric poet who had chosen an unsuitable medium, but rather a genius capable of renewing himself and who might have disclosed still other aspects had he not met with such an untimely death.3

Henderson notes:-

Edward II is remarkable in its time for its firmness of structure and the ruthless energy of its development. The adaption of Holinshed with an eye to dramatic effect also shows considerable skill.4

The sources consulted by Marlowe for this play are the least difficult to identify. Most of his material he found in Holinshed. This was published in 1586 and an old fellow of Corpus Christi, Henry Clifford by name, presented a copy, which still exists, to his old college in the following year. Marlowe has also consulted the Annals of Stow and Fabyan. From the latter he took the jif sung after the battle of Bannockburn. Bakeless lists Thomas de la Moor's Chronicles amongst Marlowe's sources. This was in manuscript at the Parker Library at Corpus Christi. In the 1578 edition of The Mirror for Magistrates there was the story - "The Tragedy of the Two Mortimers".

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1. Bakeless, J. Christopher Marlowe. Jonathan Cape, London.1938.p.187.
 2. Bradbrook, M.C. "The Jew of Malta and Edward II" in Marlowe ed. Clifford Leach. Prentice-Hall Inc., Englewood Cliffs. N.Y. 1964.p.127.
 3. Poirier, M. Christopher Marlowe. Chatto and Windus, London.1951.p.192
 4. Henderson, P. Christopher Marlowe. Longmans, Green and Co., London.1952 p. 118.

There were in existence a couple of Latin plays on the life of Edward II which were performed at Cambridge during the years that Marlowe resided there. Prof. Rowse suggests that the young Shakespeare had already written his Henry VI by 1592, and was performed by the same troupe that produced Edward II and since the two kings had many characteristics in common, it is possible that Marlowe took a hint from his younger colleague and poet. One must remember that the title-page has Marlowe's name and the date of printing on it.

Ribner points out that this play was the originator of a new tradition - historical tragedy which broke with the Senecan formula.

Marlowe's Tamperlane had heralded in and shaped the tone of a wave of historical drama which was to reach its heights in Shakespeare's first tetralogy. Marlowe's Edward II gave rise to another wave which ^{res} culminate in Shakespeare's great Lancastrian tetralogy.⁵

The Troublesome Reign and Lamentable Death of Edward II tells one a good deal about the play in its title, and the title goes on to mention the tragical fall of proud Mortimer. This fall is "tragic" in the medieval De Causibus sense of the word. The subject of the play is therefore not only the personal history of an English monarch, but aspects of his reign and salient facts about some of the nobility. This latter fact was again accented when in later revivals of the play in the title was included the clause reading- And also the life and death of Piers Gaveston, the great Earl of and mighty favourite of King Edward the Second.

One finds that the play presents events that covered a period of twenty years, from 1307 till 1330. These have been compressed and telescoped so that analysis of the text reveals that all the

5. Ribner, I. The English History Play in the Age of Shakespeare. Princeton University Press, Princeton, N.J. 1951. p. 127.

action of the play could easily have been contained in one year. That Marlowe therefore had made a close and careful study of his historical sources is unquestionable. Aside from Holinshed, as has already been mentioned, there is the satiric song of the Scots after their victory at Lannockburn. Robert Fabyan in New Chronicles of England and France, after quoting the song goes on to note -

This songe was after many dayes sungyn, in Jances, in carolis of ye maydens and mynstrellys of Scotlande, to the reproffe and disdayne of Englysshe men, with diverse others whiche I overpasse.⁶

From John Stowe's A Summary of English Chronicles Marlowe borrowed the episode of Matrevis and Gurney forcibly shaving Edward in a puddle.

Moreover, devising to disfigure him that hee might not bee knowne, they determine for to shave as well the haire of his head, as also of his beard: wherefore, as in their journey they travailed by a little water whiche ranne in a ditche, they commanded him to light from his horse to be shaven, to whome, being sett on a moale hill, a Barber came unto him with a basen of colde water taken out of the ditche, to shave him withall, sayinge unto the king that that water would serve for that time. To whome Edward answered that woulde they, noulde they, he would have warm water for his beard; and, to the end that hee might keep his promise, hee began to weepe, and to shed tears plentifully.⁷

This evidence would disprove Briggs' assertion that the Elizabethans hastily put their plays together after very cursory research. In Marlowe's case in particular, one must remember that he was a University alumnus and his training at Cambridge would, one is naturally led to suppose, induce him to more careful research.

Having thus identified Marlowe's sources one proceeds to examine what he did with them, specially with regard to the historical perspective. One has already recognised that the Elizabethans did not have the same historical vision as the man of today has.

6. Fabyan, R. Chronicles, reprint of 1811. p. 420.

7. Stow, J. Chronicle. ed. 1606. p. 350.

They tend to place Edward II in "the past" along with Chaucer who lived half a century earlier and William the Conqueror who lived three centuries before Chaucer. That Marlowe had a sharper sense of the time-scale is not improbable, but one must note that he was not writing for minds of like calibre to his own, but for the average Elizabethan man-in-the-street. Given this broad pattern of history- the present and the past - one comes to the crux of the matter. How does Marlowe attempt to indicate to his audience that the scenes they were witnessing in Edward II, inspite of any contemporary parallels, was a representation of events and figures already two hundred years old?

There is no need to emphasise further the fact that Marlowe himself realised the great difference in time between the days of the Tudors and those of the Plantagenets. It has already been mentioned that he was a Cambridge graduate. Further Richard Cholmeley would have one believe that Marlowe was one of Raleigh's coterie at Sherbourne. This select group represented some of the finest brains in Elizabethan England Cholmeley reported:-

That hee(Cholmeley) saith and verely beleveth that one Marloe is able to shew more scunde reasons for Atheisme than any devine in Englande is able to give to prove devinitie and that Marloe tolde him that hee hath read the Atheist lecture to Sir Walter Pawleigh and others.⁸

This is evidence enough to prove that Marlowe was no semi-literate dramatic apprentice, but a learned and well-read man.

A careful reader of both Marlowe's sources and his text cannot help noting the many details that Marlowe omitted. Many of these are such as would help to reinforce the historical perspective of the fourteenth century, and conveniently indicate the time-scale to his

8. Harlein Manuscripts. No. 6849.

audience. W.D. Briggs has enumerated at length the historical details which Marlowe did not mention even though every one of his sources include them.

Marlowe omitted the suppression of the Order of the Temple; everything connected with the constant warfare with Scotland, except for the allusions in ll. 655-6, 913, 962, 975 ff: everything connected with the Irish wars except allusions in ll. 419, 960, everything connected with Edward's journey to France to do homage, all quarrels between Edward and the nobles on grounds other than his maintenance of lewd favourites...⁹

Other items ignored by Marlowe are the conflicts with France, Edward's marriage, Gaveston's second exile and the exile of the Spencers. These omissions give one an idea as to Marlowe's aim in writing this drama and also the care that he took to make the structure as taut as possible so that the action was centralised round the king. Marlowe's omission of the suppression of the Templars is most significant, for in presenting this on the stage he could have drawn on popular anti-Roman Catholic sentiments. One notes that he had not hesitated to do this very thing in an earlier play, The Massacre at Paris.

Again certain omissions are such that one may be inclined to form incorrect conclusions e.g. the comparative illiteracy of the fourteenth century nobility. Lancaster quotes Latin. "Undique mors est".¹⁰ Spenser indulges in Latin quips with Baldock

Bal: I am none of these common pedants I,
That cannot speak without propterea Quod.

Spem: But one of those that saith quandoquidem,
And hath a special gift to form a verb.¹¹

Motimer Senior is well enough acquainted with classical history and mythology to quote precedent for Edward's infatuation for Gaveston.

9. Briggs, W.D. ed. Edward II. Intro. cii.

10. Brooke, T. The Works of Christopher Marlowe. Clarendon Press, Oxford. 1910. p. 335. l. 830.

11. Ibid., p. 333. ll. 772-75.

In this respect these nobles are much nearer contemporary Elizabethans than their historical originals. May be Marlowe was motivated to make this change in order to make his figures more credible for his audience.

Another very sharp contrast between actual history and the play is the attitude towards the Church. In other plays Marlowe has drawn on popular feelings against the Catholic powers, religious and political. Here he had a golden opportunity to strike out at the Catholic powers, religious and political. Here he had a golden opportunity to strike out at the Catholic Church without violating the facts of history and yet he does not take advantage of this. There is only one anti-clerical outburst; but given a weak-willed, impetuous monarch with an obsessive attachment in one direction, any obstacle to the fulfilment of royal desires would call forth such lines.

Why should a king be subject to a priest?
Proud Rome, that hatchest such imperial grooms
For these thy superstitious taper-lights,
Wherewith thy anti-Christian churches blaze,
I'll fire thy crazed bulidings, and enforce
Thy papal towers to kiss the lowly ground.
With slaughtered priests may Tiber's channels swell
And banks raised higher with their sepulchers.¹²

All the four churchmen represented in this play - the Archbishop of Canterbury, the bishops of Winchester and Coventry and one unnamed bishop who could possibly have been the Bishop of Hereford - are strong intelligent men who stand for truth and justice. There is nothing that they do or say which would cause them to forfeit the sympathy of the Elizabethan audience. It may be that Marlowe's sources restrained him from vilifying the churchmen, for Holinshed makes it quite clear that Archbishop Melton was one of the most

12. Ibid., p. 324. 11. 392-99.

honourable and respected Englishmen of his day.

The Archbishop Melton, though he was most studious of things pertaining to religion, bestowing almost his whole time about the same, yet nevertheless he was not forgetful of that which belonged to the advancement of the commonwealth.¹³

At the same time one notes the tremendous liberties the Elizabethans took with their source materials, and there is no reason to think that Holinshed was sacrosanct. A notable deviation from Holinshed is Macbeth. Holinshed very unequivocally states that Macbeth was a good king who brought peace and welfare to Scotland, yet this did not prevent Shakespeare from showing him as an ambitious immoralist.

One possible explanation for Marlowe's picture of the clergy in this play is given by H.R. Charlton and R.D. Waller in their edition of the text. They suggest that Marlowe kept close to the original because he was very consciously writing a naturalistic play.

Edward II in fact, owes something of its grim power to a certain naturalistic quality more akin to the spirit of Arden of Feversham than to that of Shakespeare's play.¹⁴

On the face of it this is a highly exaggerated statement because naturalism in 1593 as understood by Charlton and Waller was undreamt of by Marlowe. It was certainly a notion that would have been quite unpalatable to Marlowe's audience.

From this negative evidence, viz. what Marlowe omitted, one may assume certain things. Firstly, it may be well to assume that Marlowe was no careless writer and when he omitted he did so with a purpose. What exactly this purpose was it is difficult to

13. Holinshed, R. Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland. London, 1807. Vol. II. p. 552.

14. Edward II. ed. Charlton and Waller. Intro. p. 55.

ascertain, but perhaps these omissions were made in the cause of greater dramatic unity and to achieve a certain tension. No dramatist could include all the material in his source. Further one cannot ignore the practical and economic aspects of theatrical writing. A careful and judicious selection of material is vital for good drama. Lastly, Marlowe was more concerned with the human angle - the story of a few interesting people rather than the portrait of a whole age.

HISTORY IN EDWARD II: KINGSHIP

When we reverse the process and examine the text for positive evidence we emerge with some rather striking information which would give the lie to both Briggs, who speaks of careless composition of Elizabethan playwrights, and also to Charlton and Waller whose statement of "an uneasy effect" of a play where the facts have been "dully imagined" must be modified.

The most obvious point from which to start an investigation of a sense of time past in Edward II is in the central figure--the king himself. Ribner and Levin make mention of the fact that this is the first tragedy in which Marlowe abandons the Senecan formula, and instead tells the story of a potentially good man who is ruined by his own incapacities. For this play Marlowe chose a king -- a real king of a real country unlike Tamberlane who though a historical figure for most Elizabethans was conceived of as inhabiting the never-never land of the exotic. The questions the seeker after historical realism must ask are how does Marlowe present this king of days past? What are the significant differences, that would be easily recognized by his audience, between Edward II and their own reigning monarch? It is very difficult indeed to postulate with any definitiveness the Renaissance idea of kingship as apposed to the Medieval. The Renaissance was in many ways an emanation of the Middle Ages, drawing on it for many of its theories and practices. The man of the Renaissance was not born complete within himself with no roots in the past. We must therefore be chary of being too eager to spotlight "medieval" attitudes and aspects in Edward II.

The first notion we have of kingship in the play is one of

absolutism. The king has almost limitless power and it is not dutiful for his subjects to question his prerogative. Almost the very first words spoken by Edward are a sign of the power of kingship.

Ile have my will, and these two Mortimers,
That crosse me thus, shall know I am displeased.¹⁵

Throughout the play Edward continues to make reference to his authority, and to express amazement that he should be challenged.

I will have Gaveston, and you shall know
What danger tis to stand against your king.¹⁶

When Edward is coerced into abdicating in the midst of his sorrow and agony he does not forget that he is a king.

See, monsters, see, ile weare my crowne againe.
What, feare you not the furie of your king?¹⁷

The kings power over his subjects and their property is absolute. The Bishop of Coventry is divested of his possessions and these are bestowed on Gaveston at the king's order. Edward rebukes Mortimer when that worthy chides Gaveston for being too casual in his ways before the king.

VWere he a peasant, being my minion,
Ile make the proudest of you stoope to him.¹⁸

This absolutism, however, cannot be emphasized too strongly as a political theory of the days before Marlowe. The Tudors, and Elizabeth in particular, have been recorded in history as amongst the most absolute monarchs that the world has ever seen. Queen Elizabeth had as much power over her subjects as Edward II had over his. Like Gaveston, Raleigh was raised from the obscurity of a semi-successful nobody to equality with the highest in the land. Then with equal authority he was sent down to Sherborne in disgrace.

15. Briggs. ed. ll. 78-9.

16. ll. 96-7.

17. ll. 2027-8.

18. ll. 324-5.

The despotic power of the Queen was too well known for a show of absolutism on the stage to be enough to date a play. It is true that medieval kings did have such power in their hands, but such power was not peculiar to them alone.

It is therefore in other aspects of kingship that we must look for signs of a historical perspective. Here Michel Poirier has something pertinent to affirm.

The plot can be summed up in one sentence: It is the story of a Feudal monarch who attempts to govern as an absolute sovereign and fails.¹⁹

Marlowe has not forgotten the Feudal aspect of his history: the complex heirarchy of classes and social distinctions is presented. The king is after all only the greatest amongst equals and his nobles are every bit as good as he. True, Edward is a Plantaganet and the son of a king. But aside from this, Warwick, Lancaster, Penbroke, and the other nobles are as good as Edward is. To think of the Elizabethan Earls of Essex, Leicester, and Surrey as approximating in any respect to their Queen was quite impossible. The very word that Edward's nobles used to describe themselves is "peers", that is, one of the same rank and quality. The concept of the nobleman being courtiers was developed after the fourteenth century. This notion of being Edward's peers helps to indicate yet further why the nobles disliked Gaveston and Spencer. Gaveston and Spencer were not of noble birth and therefore not peers, but merely courtiers. Yet, Edward's regard for them gave Gaveston and Spencer the rank and privileges of the peerage. In the eyes of the nobles Gaveston and Spencer had no claim to the peerage either by right or by merit.

The Feudal political system was a highly stratified one, and

19. Michel Poirier - Christopher Marlowe. Chatto and Windus. London. 1961. p. 173.

each person fitted into a convenient slot with a handy label. Each person was bound to maintain his position in society, and this was formalised by a system of fealty and oaths whereby each individual acknowledged his duties and enjoyed certain rights in return. This was an expertly contractual system whereby everyone had a function to perform. If one broke the oath and thus did not fulfill the function that was expected social harmony and order were overthrown. For the Feudal mind there was no more heinous crime than that of not honoring this "social contract" that one was obligated to adhere to.

In the case of kingship this pattern was quite clear. The king was born the eldest male child into the royal household, but he maintained his kingship by fulfilling his share of the feudal oath. The importance of oaths is seen almost at the very beginning of the play when Mortimer Jr. angrily declares that Gaveston's return from exile could not be brooked by him because he had sworn to Edward's father, the late king, that he (Mortimer) would not permit Gaveston to return.

Mine vnckle heere, this Earle, & I myselfe,
Were sworne to your father at his death,
That he should nere returne into the realme:
And know, my lord, ere I will breake my oath,
This sword of mine, that should offend your foes,
Shall sleepe within the scabberd at thy neede;²⁰

A more forceful expression of this sense of sworn duty is seen when the nobles are furious at Gaveston's monopoly of royal favour.

Mor. se. Lay hands on that traitor Gaveston,
Kent. Is this the dutie that you owe your king?
War. We know our duties, let him know his peeres.²¹

The barons over and over again emphasize the fact that Edward is not fulfilling his duty as a prince, he is being unjust, he is favouring one of lower birth. This militated against the feudal

20. Briggs ed. ll. 82-87.

21. ll. 315-17.

sense of propriety where one was expected to move with familiarity only with equals. The king had attacked the curia in the person of the Bishop of Coventry and had wrongfully seized the Bishop's possessions. In the scene between Edward and the leaders of baronial opposition beginning l. 934 the nobles present Edward with a list of occasions where he had failed to fulfill his function as a king: "the prodigall gifts bestowed on Gaveston have drawne thy treasure drie and made thee weake"²² "thy garrisons are beaten out of France"²³ "the haughty Dane commands the narrow seas".²⁴ "What forraine prince sends thee ambassadors?"²⁵

Thy court is naked, being bereft of those
That makes a king seeme glorious to the world,
I meane the peeres, who thou shouldst dearly love.²⁶

Since the king has broken his coronation oath the nobles are automatically absolved from any obligations on their part and are justified in raising the banner of revolt. So argued the barons.

When meeting to discuss the banishment of Gaveston we find the nobles expressing such sentiments as :

Lan. VVhat we confirme the king will frustrate.
Mor. iu. Then may we lawfully revolt from him.²⁷

When Edward expresses his exasperation with the nobles he is thus replied:

Edw. VVas ever king thus over ruide as I?
Lan. Learne then to rule vs better and the realme.²⁸

Even the Queen who should naturally be the last to rise against her husband is forced to do so because Edward is a "misgoverned king". We must note here a great respect for the office of kingship which is shown by all the peers, but disaffection only against the

22. ll. 954-5.

23. l. 958.

24. l. 964.

25. l. 966.

26. ll. 970-3.

27. ll. 279-80.

28. ll. 332-3.

unworthy holder of the office. The nobles always offer their love and loyalty should Edward purge the kingdom of the canker that he nurtures.

A situation such as Edward II created was quite unthinkable in Elizabethan times. The monarch was expected to fulfil certain royal duties, but she was not the greatest amongst equals. No one amongst the Tudors worked harder at always reminding her subjects that the gulf between monarch and subjects was a great one. No further evidence is needed for loyalty to the crown in spite of the actions of the ruler than in the case of Mary Tudor. She attacked the national church with vigour, allied herself by marriage with England's most hated rival, and yet there were no widespread revolt against her in which both commons and nobles joined. Further, it was quite impossible for Elizabethan nobles to speak to their Queen in the terms employed by Edward's nobles--Elizabeth would have made short shrift of any such bold speaker.

Mor. iu. Cosin, our hands I hope shall fence our heads,
And strike off his that makes you threaten vs.
Come, vnckle, let vs leaue the brainsick king,
And henceforth parle with our naked swords.²⁹

Open insolence is depicted thus:

Edw. Lay hands on that traitor Mortimer.
Mor. se. Lay hands on that traitor Gauestion.³⁰

And again:

Mor. Mine vnckles taken prisoner by the Scots.
Edw. Then ransome him.
Lan. Twas in your wars, you should ransome him.
Mor. iu. And you shall ransome him, or else--
Edw. What, Mortimer, you will not threaten him?³¹

29. ll. 123-26.
30. ll. 314-15.
31. ll. 938-42.

This attitude of revolt against a king who does not uphold his coronation oath is confirmed by the Church. The Archbishop of Canterbury, throughout a man of few words, makes it quite clear that the king has overstepped the bounds in attacking the Bishop of Coventry.

God himselfe is vp in armes,
When violence is offered to the church.³²

Again it is the Bishop who forces the issue of Gaveston's exile:

Remember how the Bishop was abused:
Either banish him that was the cause thereof,
Or I will presentlie discharge these lords
Of dutie and allegiance due to thee.³³

It is also significant that amongst those empowered by the barons to ask Edward to resign the crown is a prince of the church.

Wherein has Edward chiefly offended? Here again Marlowe gives us an answer that would have been very satisfactory to the middle-ages. To accept Poierier's view is certainly too extreme.

The king he has portrayed is an unintelligent man, who allows himself to be swayed by his emotions, in whom the least incident is liable to cause a sudden alteration of mood. . . This despot is entirely devoid of realism and even of intelligence.³⁴

Holinshed indicates Edward's short comings as a king thus:

he wanted judgement and prudent discretion to make choise of safe and discreet counsellors, receiving those into his favour, that abused the same to their private gaine and advantage, not respecting the advancement of the common-wealth.³⁵

In other words Edward gave a poor account of his stewardship. Edward puts his personal pleasure above his duties as a king and will not brook interference with his private inclinations even though they harm his public efficiency.

32. ll. 247-8.

33. ll. 363-66.

34. M. Poierier - C.M. Chatto & Windus. London 1951. pp. 178-180.

35. Chronicles. London 1587. p. 327. vol. III.

Directly it is suggested that his position as king must encroach upon or limit his private life, his fury is loosed and with confusing irrelevance he urges his kingly right of freedom.³⁶

That Edward mistakes and neglects his stewardship is proved by his words to Gaveston:

Ile give thee more; for but to honour thee
Is Edward pleased with kinglie regiment.³⁷

Yet there is another point on which Edward failed politically--he alienated his peers, the nobles of the realm.

Lastly, most historians of the Feudal Age in recording the history of any country have never failed to maintain that strength was a prime virtue in a king. In the fourteenth century more than in later years the length of the sword determined the limit of sway. A physically and morally weak man could, by practising astute diplomacy and that kind of statecraft which Elizabethans were wont to call Machiavellian, rise to control a kingdom in the Middle Ages and by making Edward himself confess to his fault Marlowe has lifted history out of his own times.

Commend me to my sonne, and bid him rule
Better then I; yet how have I transgrest,
Vnlesse it be with too much clemencie?³⁸

This passage brings to mind a similar confession of Richard II when he too reflects upon his failure as a king. "I wasted time and now doth time waste me".³⁹ The emphasis on Edward's acts of injustice leads one to infer that Marlowe might have been drawing a moral of some kind. Over and over again Edward does not give just due to one who deserves it--the Bishop of Coventry is badly treated, Edward refuses to have anything to do with the Queen unless she persuades the barons to recall Gaveston from Ireland, he refuses aid to

36. Ellis-Farmer - Ch. M. Methuen & Co. London 1927. p. 112.

37. ll. 164-5.

38. ll. 2074-6.

39. Richard II ed. W. Bright. Act V Sc. V. l. 50.

Mortimer in ransoming of his uncle, and Edward is unduly harsh to his own brother. It would appear that Marlowe modifies the bolder political schemes set out in his more grandiose earlier plays. In this play Marlowe tends to suppose that public efficiency in a ruler is not enough unless it be confirmed and supported by private virtue. The above theory is one that centuries earlier than Marlowe's own would have thoroughly confirmed--but Machiavelli had tainted the Renaissance political arena. More misunderstood than rightfully employed, Machiavelli gave an impetus to the rising tide of brilliant diplomats who were certainly not blameless in their private lives but were highly successful in the world.

Marlowe appears to double this feudal political view by presenting Mortimer as a foil to Edward. In this he changed the historical facts by giving to the Mortimers a larger share in the baronial revolt than history warranted. However, it is interesting to note that in one aspect Edward and Mortimer are one--both fail in the duties expected of them in the hierarchial system. Mortimer fails as a peer of the realm, his ambition unseats him and he goes too far in his attempts to usurp the royal power. It is also a clever balancing of character on Marlowe's part in that both Edward and Mortimer lack what is the other's forte, the good man Edward against the good politician Mortimer.

All of Edward's weaknesses are mirrored in Mortimer's strength; what private virtue Edward may have is set off by Mortimer's total lack of it. Those elements which cause Edward to fall cause Mortimer to rise.⁴⁰

Finally, with regard to the king, Marlowe does not mention the Divine Right Theory of kingship even once in the course of the play, whereas Shakespeare is conscious of it in the writing of Richard II.

40. Ribner. p. 129.

"Not all the water in the rough rude sea. Can wash the balm off from an annointed King".⁴¹ Such sentiments are never expressed by Edward though he is often enough in a similar situation to Richard. Yet Marlowe makes it clear that rebellion against the king is wrong, and though there is no outspoken Bishop of Carlisle to prophesy dire consequences of treason, there are hints all through Edward II to show the wrongness of revolt against the king.

But yet lift not your swords against the King.⁴²

Proud traytor Mortimer, why doost thou chase
Thy lawfull King, thy sovreigne, with thy sword?⁴³

The above point should not be emphasized too much in indicating an earlier historical attitude. The Elizabethans had similar ideas, and these were fostered by the National Church. The Queen was the head of the church and therefore champion of true religion, and any revolt against her was not only treason, but sacrreligious as well.

41. Richard II ed. W. Wright. Act III. Sc. II. ll. 44-5.

42. l. 268.

43. ll. 1761-2.

HISTORY AND EDWARD II: DEMOCRACY

Marlowe has included a few other matters of a political nature to indicate a distance in time. Democracy as one understands that term in the present day was quite unknown both by Elizabethans, and the fourteenth century. However, there had been some democratic progress from 1327 to 1593. The commons had gradually acquired more political power. In the days of the Tudors the mercantile class was emerging from the ranks of the petty merchants and commercial man, and was growing in political power. This section of the population was the bulwark of both the middle-class and Puritanism. The mention of them in Shakespeare gives instance of their growing influence. The city of London was forced to proscribe the building of theatres within its precincts because of Puritan pressure. On the other hand, the commons were still more or less ignored by Elizabeth, but like the rest of the Tudors, she could cleverly manipulate them for her own purposes. The Tudors had a happy method whereby they always got their own way and yet made it appear as if they were doing the general will of the people. The national enthusiasm in Tudor times over political and religious issues was unparalleled in earlier history.

As compared to this, we find in Edward II that the commons are generally objects of contempt for the nobles and are only mentioned when their aid is needed. The barons are angry for their own sakes and plead their own causes against the king. Only when open revolt breaks out and Mortimer and the Queen lead the rebel army, is the general cause of "the realm" proclaimed. In recalling Gaveston from exile Mortimer wishes to so manœuvre things to that "we have the people of our side".⁴⁴

And when the commons and the nobles loyne,
Tis not the king can buckler Gaveston.⁴⁵

Only after all other persuasion has failed to draw Edward away from the evil influence of Gaveston and the play well advanced do the nobles bring before Edward the cause of the commons. They plead that Edward's prodigality and neglect of foreign invasions have been a trial to the commons. "The murmuring commons overstretched hath".⁴⁶ One can imagine the Elizabethan spectators of such deeds saying. "Well might this have happened in King Edward's reign, but Lords of Leicester or Essex dare not treat us in this fashion!"

The political machinery of feudal times did not give the ruler the latitude that was afforded the Tudors. There operated a more effective system of "checks and balances" to use a term employed by Montesquieu in later years. The King could not ride rough-shod over the nobles in the fashion that the Tudors were wont to do. It is inconceivable to see Pembroke, Warwick, Lancaster and Mortimer of the play appearing before the Court of Star Chamber as Henry VII ordered some of his courtiers to do. The system of feudal fealty had within itself this perception of checks and balances. If an ordinance was passed exiling Gaveston and the King agreed to it, Gaveston could not legitimately return, for not even the King could by his own authority annul the decree of banishment. Even the King was bound by the ordinance. This system was not one that was normal in Renaissance times when the ruler often acted on bold personal initiative regardless of existing laws. Here again Marlowe has harkened back to the fourteenth century and attempted to place his drama in its historical context. It is interesting in connection with Gaveston's exile to note that history records that Edward solicited the Pope himself to bring his influence to bear upon the nobles so that Gaveston could be recalled from Ireland. Marlowe adds drama to history by making the Queen solicit the nobles for Gaveston's recall.

⁴⁵. II. 894-5.

⁴⁶. I. 956.

HISTORY AND EDWARD III: RELIGION AND MORALITY

Leaving the political picture as presented by Marlowe and moving to another sphere where time past is depicted, one is led to examine the religious and moral aspects of the fourteenth century as seen by Marlowe. It is common to speak of the Medieval Age as being one in which religion and the church played dominant roles. The medieval concept of history has been generally assumed to be one where all history was a reflection of God's will working itself out in the world. The rise and fall of nations, as of men, was a part of the Divine Pattern of the universe.

However, in this play there is little moralizing on the basis that Edward's misrule was part of the Divine plan for humanity. Marlowe in this aspect seems to be very much a Renaissance secularist, for, judging from his works we find great emphasis on the power and possibilities that lie with the individual to make for his success. It is man who holds the key to his own destiny. Edward's defiance of the Church and his treatment of the Bishop of Coventry could be explained in the light of Marlowe's humanist views; also the strong anti-Catholicism of his contemporaries would support those speeches and actions of Edward that were against the Church.

However, Marlowe does present the Church as being a very strong agency and influence upon Edward. The Bishops are decisive in the crises that face Edward. The bishops are men of few words, but when they do speak they speak directly and from a position of strength. The Bishop of Coventry is honest and bold with Gaveston.

- As then I did incense the parlement
So will I now, and thou shalt back to France.⁴⁷

The Church makes its position against Edward quite clear. The nobles revolt for a variety of reasons, some personal and others patriotic. The Church appears to have but one grievance against Edward--he has attacked the Church in the person of the Bishop of Coventry.

First, were his sacred garments rent and torne,
Then laide they violent hands vpon him; next,
Himselfe imprisoned, and his goods asceased:
This certifie the Pope; away, take horses.⁴⁸

That Archbishop of Canterbury makes his position clear.

Lan. My lord, will you take armes against the king?

Bish. What neede I? God himselfe is vp in armes,
When violence is offered to the church.

Mor. in. Then wil you loine with vs that be his peeres
To banish or behead that Gaveston?

Bish. What els, my lords? for it concernes me neere;
The Bishoprick of Couentrie is his.⁴⁹

When Edward and the nobles are shouting threats at each other over Gaveston's exile, it is the Bishop who firmly steers both parties towards a decision.

Bish. And see what we your counsellors haue done
(Handing Edward the paper).⁵⁰

Again when decision is lost in words the Bishop interposes one short sentence:

Bish. Nothing shall alter vs, wee are resolu'd.⁵¹

And finally:

Bish. Are you content to banish him the realme?

Edw. I see I must, and therefore am content.⁵²

Edward makes it quite clear that when the Bishop threatens to absolve the nobles of their oaths of allegiance, "the Legate of the Pope must be obeyed".⁵³ The nobles bluster, the prelates use the iron hand in the velvet glove. Is it therefore surprising that Edward explodes in frustration? "Why should a king be subject to a priest?"⁵⁴

48. II. 242-5.

49. II. 246-252.

50. I. 338.

51. I. 368.

52. II. 378-9.

53. I. 358.

54. I. 390.

The Elizabethans knew only too well that no Tudor monarch would be subject to a priest of any Church. Henry VIII had beheaded Bishop Fisher and dismissed Wolsey; Mary Tudor had burnt Latimer and Ridley, and Elizabeth was more than capable of holding her own against any ecclesiastic.

The Bishops again display their strength in the Abdication Scene; the king rages and the nobles argue; the bishop firmly convinces Edward in a few well chosen words to give up his crown. It is significant that it is to the Bishop that the crown is finally surrendered. By giving this picture of the power of the Church Marlowe pointed to a time other than his own as the scene for the action of his play. His audience would at once see the difference. The Elizabethan attitude has been described thus:

Apologists found that the 'true' religion was best defined by terms of moderation, decency, order and practical reason. The need of the hour was for political loyalty and for ethical idealism to support it.⁵⁵

Marlowe underlines the powerful position of the Church in his play by making it a haven and a place of refuge from the troubles of the world. It is symbolic that Edward should fly from an unsuccessful battle and take refuge in an abbey and actually be represented with his head in an abbott's lap. There would appear to be a less direct way of indicating that the life in a religious order is a better and more contented one than life in the busy material world.

Father, this life contemplative is heaven,
O, that I might this life in quiet lead.⁵⁶

In the Renaissance the benefits and pleasures of the speculative and unworldly life were over and over enumerated and extolled, but there

55. R.W. Battenhouse--Marlowe's Tamburlaine. Vanderbilt Univ. Press. 1941. p. 21.

56. ll. 1866-7.

was an equal, if not greater emphasis laid upon conduct in the world of human affairs: "The only end of knowledge ought to be to live well".⁵⁷ The world to come was anticipated as eagerly by Elizabethans as by their predecessors--but the world around them was not ignored. Edward's confession to the Abbot could be interpreted as the attitude of a fourteenth century man who had always been basically of the opinion that the life of the religious order was better because it was not one of action in this world.

Aside from the emphasis that is conspicuously put upon the power and workings of the Church as exemplified in the words and deeds of both laymen and priests, there are other evidences that Marlowe was depicting an old story. The general morality and ethics that are reflected in the political intrigues and quarrels also have a medieval flavour. However in making any assumptions on these matters one is on very dangerous ground as much feudal morality was inherited by the Elizabethans.

There is the question of expediency. Mortimer, while pleading for the recall of Gaveston from his exile, adds that if he (Gaveston) continued to be troublesome a convenient assassination could always be arranged. Mortimer seems to imply in his speech that though the assassination may be wrong the expediency of the situation would warrant the deed.

But were he here, detested as he is,
How easilie might some base slave be subbornd
To greet his lordship with a poniard,
And none so much as blame the murtherer,
But rather praise him for that braue attempt,
And in the Chronicle enrowle his name
For purging of the realme of such a plague.⁵⁸

Again Edward in his exasperation with his peers says:

57. Nashe. "Anatome of Absurditie" ed. McKerrow I. 48.
58. ll. 552-563.

Would Lancaster and he (Mortimer) has both carroust
A howle of poison to each others health.⁵⁹

However these poisonings and political murders were more allied in the Elizabethan minds with the Renaissance princes (especially those of Italy) than with English dukes of time past.

Again the belief in witchcraft which is exhibited in Edward II is as much as part of Macbeth and Renaissance England. A decade after the writing of this play King James I himself wrote a treatise on daemonology. The nobles in attempting to account for Edward's unusual passion for Gaveston believe that magic is involved in the relationship.

Mort. Jr. Is it not strange, that he (Edward) is thus bewitched?⁶⁰

Another notion which scholars are apt to accept as showing attitudes of earlier times is the concept of the fall of great men. The fall of the great man had to be due in a large measure to Fortune and not so much because of his own failings. The human element in the tragic ruin of mortals was present, but subordinate in influence to the ways of Providence. Boccaccio's De Casibus illustrates this point very well. The Renaissance tended to put greater emphasis on "human choices". This spirit was not entirely lost, for Raleigh in his History of the World says that "chance is the idolatry or god of fools".⁶¹

There appeared to be a tendency towards equating chance with the Christian God, the implication being that all things come from God and so as He wills He withdraws what he has given. All mankind is in the hands of God totally.

59. ll. 1033-4.

60. l. 262.

61. Raleigh. History of World I. i. 15.

Providence binds together human acts and fortunes by the indissoluble connexion of causes.⁶²

The "tragic flaw" as understood by the medieval thinker was in reality in a theological context a lack of grace, and in a philosophical context a lack of knowledge and moderation.

One may apply the above very fruitfully to Marlowe's play. Holinshed, Marlowe's source, was fully conscious of the concept of the fall of great men and throws over his account of Edward II a moral tone and sums up all events as "the pitifull tragedie of this Kings tyme". The Mirror for Magistrates is one other such literary composition where the fall of princes up to Tudor times is the subject matter. That Marlowe was fully aware of this earlier attitude is evidenced in his title, "The troublesome reigne and lamentable death of Edward the Second, King of England: with the tragical fall of proud Mortimer".⁶³

That it is "pride" which is specifically mentioned is interesting, pride being one of the Seven Deadly Sins. These Seven Sins were a regular feature in morality plays of an earlier age than Marlowe's.

Behind all these attitudes regarding the fall of man and the other ethical standards of the fourteenth century, was a basic faith in a moral order that was eminently just. This moral order had laid down inflexible laws and those that broke these laws had judgement here on earth even before they left this earth. Edward and Gaveston and Mortimer all are destroyed because they do not do what the moral order expects of them. Edward is a King-but he puts his private desires and feelings above his royal duties. He would gladly forfeit his realm for Gaveston's company:

62. St. Thomas Aquinas. Theologica I. xxi. 4.

63. W.D. Briggs. ed. Edward II. London 1914. Title page.

Make seuerall kingdomes of this monarchie,
And share it equally amongst you all,
So I may haue some nooke or corner left,
To frolike with my deereest Causton.⁶⁴

Gaveston does not do unto others as he would they should do to him, but uses his position in the King's favour to advance his own favourites such as Spencer and Balduck. He speaks rudely to the nobles and is guilty of pride. Being the kings confidant and minion he says:

I think myselfe as great
As Ceasar riding in the Romaine streete
With captive Kings at his triumphant Carre.⁶⁵

He intends to abuse his enviable position at court to "draw the pliant King which way I please".⁶⁶

Marlowe incidentally paints a more favourable portrait of Gaveston than Holinshed does.

For having revoked againe into England his (Edward's) old mate the said Peers de Gaveston. . . through whose compaine and societie he was suddenlie so corrupted, that he burst out into most heinous vices; for then using the said Peers as a procurer of his disordered dooings, he began to haue his nobles in no regard, to set nothing by their instructions, and to take small heed unto the good government of the common wealth, so that within a while, he gave himselfe to wantonnes passing his time in voluptuous pleasure, and riotous excesse: and to helpe them forward in that kind of life, the foresaid Peers, who (as it may be thought, he had sworne to make the king to forget himselfe, and the state, to the which he was called) furnished his court with companies of jesters, ruffians, flattering parasites, musicians, and other vile and naughtie ribalds, the king might spend both daies and nights in jesting, plaieng, banketing, and in such other filthie and dishonorable exercises.⁶⁷

Mortimer at the outset of the play is a high minded patriot with the noblest and most worthy motives for his action. He sees that Gaveston's evil influence on the king "will be the ruin of the realm and us".⁶⁸ But as he acquires greater power, and his illicit

64. ll. 364-67.

65. ll. 172-4.

66. l. 53.

67. Holinshed, 1586. 318.

68. l. 239.

amour with the Queen progresses the love of power corrupts him and drives him even to murder.

And others are but shrubs compared to me,
All tremble at my name, and I fear none.⁶⁹

All three have gone beyond that which was ordained for them and the Divinity that shapes our ends struck down all three--Edward, Gaveston and Mortimer. Before one leaves the matter of moral standards of the middle ages as reflected in this play there is one other question which must be examined-- the nature of the relationship between Edward and Gaveston. Nearly all Marlowe scholars have something strong to say about it, but with the evidence at our disposal perhaps any final statement on the question is difficult. Holinshed tells us that Edward "Was of nature given to lightnesse" and that in the company of Peers "burst out into most heinous vices". The monk of Malmesbury in Vita Edwardi Secundi says:

Indeed I do not remember to have heard that one man so loved another. Jonathan cherished David, Achilles loved Patroclus. But we do not read that they were immoderate.⁷⁰

In the play the only hint that we receive directly from the lines that would lead us to conceive of an unnatural affection between Edward and Gaveston came from the Queen. (l. 254-261).

Miss V. Ellis-Fermor and Professor Mario Praz in no uncertain terms label this relationship homosexual. Mr. Praz explains also why Marlowe chose this subject:

To a normal Elizabethan Edward II would have appeared no less of a monster than any of the Incestuous and murderous petty lords of Renaissance Italy. . . The degenerate King is the most successful of Marlowe's figures because the poet saw in him a soul akin to his own, disturbed by the same idiosyncrasy of sense.⁷¹

of
Speaking of Marlowe's treatment of history Miss Ellis-Fermor writes:

69. ll. 2538-41.

70. Vita Edwardi Secundi ed. and trans. N. Denholm-Young. Thos. Nelson and Sons. London 1957. p. 261.

71. Mario Praz-C. Marlowe in Eng. Studies 1931, vol. 1931. p. 211.

the notorious fondness for favourites, bluntly set down by the historian as perversion, becomes a not unbeautiful love story against a dark background of storm and danger.⁷²

He (Edward) is also a sodomite whose whole life is subordinated to the exclusive passion he feels first for Gaveston, then for Spencer, and which will be the cause of his downfall.⁷³

Paul Kocher is apparently of the same opinion as those quoted above for he says that Marlowe "colours the friendships of Edward with the forbidden passion of homosexuality".⁷⁴ Most scholars argue a case that Marlowe himself was a pervert and was therefore both naturally led to a similar subject in history, and naturally led to make it a beautiful and sympathetic relationship. However, there is little doubt that the medieval church and legal code both took an unfavourable attitude towards homosexuality and as such they fully expected a just Deity to strike down the guilty.

In this connection it may be worth remembering that L.J. Mills sees Edward II as a Friendship Play along with many others of a like nature written during Elizabethan times, such as Endymion and Two Gentlemen of Verona.

Marlowe very clearly shows Edward as a man loving association with his fellows in a high and honourable manner, and it is altogether unnecessary, if not wrong to see in the relationship anything of an immoral character.⁷⁵

Judging from Renaissance writings, one tends to assume that friendships between men were much closer in nature than during any of the succeeding centuries. In the play itself, for we cannot allow the chronicles to prejudice our opinions, any charge of unnatural affection is almost totally absent. It is noteworthy that when the nobles bring charges against Edward and Gaveston there is no mention of immoral living.

72. Ellis-Fermor. C. Marlowe. Methuen and Co. London, 1927. p. 117.

73. Michel Poirier. C. Marlowe. Chatto and Windus. London. 1950. p. 178

74. Paul Kocher - C. Marlowe. Chapel Hill University of N. Carolina Press. 1946. p. 205.

75. L.J. Mills - "One Soul in Bodies Twain". Principia Press Inc. 1937. p. 248.

HISTORY AND EDWARD II: SOCIAL LIFE

In the sphere of social matters and mores Marlowe has taken care to indicate earlier times in a variety of ways. Perhaps the most constantly recurring notion is the great emphasis placed on social rank. The sense of belonging to a well-born family and the privileges of birth were emphasized by feudal hierarchy more than in Elizabethan times. This has been dealt with in a measure when the concept of kingship was examined.

The most frequently cited grudge against Gaveston on the part of the nobles is his unaristocratic origin. Lancaster calls him "that base and obscure Gaveston".⁷⁶

Mort. Jr. Thou villiane, wherefore talkest thou of a King
That hardly art a gentleman by birth.⁷⁷

Warwick says to Edward:

You that are princely borne should shake him off.⁷⁸

Even the patient Kent is perturbed at the titles heaped on Gaveston and attempts to teach his brother moderation.

Kent: Brother, the least of these may well suffice
For one of greater birth than Gaveston.⁷⁹

As regards their own position the nobles are very conscious that their duty and allegiance is due the king, yet they are the peers of the realm. Mort. Jr. asks the Archbishop of Canterbury.

Then will you joine with us that be his peers?⁸⁰

Later when the nobles demand the banishment of Gaveston.

Kent: Is this the dutie that you owe your King?
War: We know our duties, let him know his peers.⁸¹

76. ll. 101.

77. ll. 322-3.

78. l. 375.

79. ll. 158-9.

80. l. 249.

81. ll. 316-7.

This clear social pattern and the strong emphasis on birth was not so apparent in Marlowe's own times. Francis Drake and Walter Raleigh were knighted and the latter for a while had the same influence with the Queen as did Gaveston with Edward. Yet the peers of the realm did not take offence at this, or if they did, they did not express themselves as the nobles do in Edward II.

Chivalry was not yet quite dead and the elaborate chivalric code of conduct was still operative in the reign of Edward II. Certain things were just not done, no matter what the provocation. A notable instance of this is found when Arundell brings the news of Gaveston's death to Edward. The first amongst the listeners to react to this news is the younger Spencer.

A bloudie part, flatly against the law of armes.⁸²
It is not the death of Gaveston so much as the manner of it that motivates Spencer's speech.

When Gaveston is captured by the baronial forces Warwick says:

But for thou wert the favorit of a King
Thou shalt have so much honour at our hands.⁸³

It must be remembered that Gaveston had been created Earl of Cornwall, Lord of Man, and Lord Chamberlain. He therefore could not be hanged in the fashion of ordinary criminals. As a gentleman he could claim the axe rather than the noose.

These niceties of civil conduct would be well appreciated by Marlowe's audience although in their own times the notion was yet dying.

Spencer's advice to Baldock regarding the behaviour of a courtier savours of calculated hypocrisy and possibly a little malicious fun at Baldock's expense. But there is emphasis on how

82. l. 1409.

83. ll. 1184-5.

"to court it like a Gentleman"⁸⁴ so that Baldock may fit into court circles.

In Elizabethan times the court was far more heterogenous in composition than in Edward's rule-- drawing on all spheres of life. The days of chivalry demanded a uniformity of courtly behaviour from all who aspired to enter royal circles.

Regarding the position of women a sharp contrast is drawn between Gaveston's wife and the Queen. The latter is certainly one of Marlowe's finest and most convincing creations because she does not remain static. However as she changes from the suffering wife to the cunning mistress she loses the sympathy of the audience. It is true that she turns from Edward under very grave provocation and never shows any inclination to put Mortimer on the throne. On the other hand, she wishes to secure the succession for her son. However, Gaveston's wife is also deeply in love with a husband who apparently neglects her--yet she never deserts him as the Queen does her husband.

The humanistic Renaissance man would be more inclined to give his sympathy and understanding to Queen Isabel than the man of the fourteenth century. In earlier times a wife was supposed to remain faithful and forgiving, true to her marriage vows no matter how rough the marital path. One does not intend to imply that the Renaissance condoned marital infidelity if the provocation was strong, but only that the Renaissance took a more tolerant attitude towards infidelity. On the other hand Edward's treatment of his wife was totally unforgiveable by medieval standards. It is true that the fourteenth century was a man's world, but that did not permit neglect of one's wife, even though she was the inferior being for in the Theologues it is written "The woman is subject to the man, on

account of the weakness of her nature, both of mind and body".⁸⁵

The Queen's complaint is touching:

O miserable and distressed Queene!
Would, when I left sweet France and was imbarkt,
That charming Circes, walking on the waues,
Had chaungd my shape, or at the mariage day
The cup of Hymen had beene full of poyson,
Or with those armes that twind about my neck,
I had beene stifled, and not liued to see
The king my lord thus to abandon me.⁸⁶

Family ties as reflected in this play point to certain ideals.

Edward is very negligent of almost every tie of blood. None could be more patient and long-suffering than Kent, but Edward is ungentle even to him.

Edw. Art thou an enemy to my Gaueston?
Kent. I, and it grieues me that I fauoured him.
Edw. Traitor, be gone, whine thou with Mortimer.
Kent. So will I, rather then with Gaueston.
Edw. Out of my sight, and trouble me no more.
Kent. No maruell though thou scorne thy noble peeres,
When I thy brother am relected thus.⁸⁷

Kent however repents for bearing armes against his brother and king.

Vilde wretch, why hast thou, of all unkinde
Borne armes against thy brother and thy king?⁸⁸

He tries to save the young prince from falling into the hands of Mortimer and attempts to rescue the captive Edward. To the end he remains the loyal brother and protective uncle. This is the ideal kind of blood relation.

The Prince too is a loving son and will not take the crown without his father's consent.

Prin. Mother, perswade me not to weare the crowne;
Let him be king; I am too yong to raigne.
Queene. But bee content, seeing it his highnesse pleasure,
Prin. Let me but see him first, and then I will.⁸⁹

85. St. Thomas Aquinas. Summa Theologica. VI. xii. 7.

86. II. 464-71.

87. II. 1008-1014.

88. II. 1702-3.

89. II. 2199-202.

The Prince pleads for his uncle's life and at the close of the play takes revenge on Mortimer for his father's death. The Queen is punished for her share in the baronial revolt and the imprisonment of Edward by being sent to the Tower.

The immediate history of the Tudor family was well known to the populace. Henry VIII had not been by any means an ideal father. Mary's treatment of her sister Elizabeth and her cousin Lady Jane Grey, and Elizabeth's treatment of Mary Queen of Scots left much to be desired. Edward VI was a puppet in the hands of his uncles. The Renaissance imagination was filled with tales of treachery and intrigue within families in high places. Yet, one cannot lay too great an emphasis on these factors as contributing to a historical perspective.

The ceremonies and rivalry mentioned in the text are of medieval times. Gaveston in the opening of the play mentions "Italian masks by night" which is an obvious anachronism. However, there are a few other references made to entertainments of the time. Edward remembers his youthful sports to Lightborn.

Tell Isabel the Queene I lookt not thus
VVhen for her sake I ran at tilt in Fraunce,
And there vnhorste the duke of Cleremont.⁹⁰

The nobles sent their formal declaration of war through a "Heralde from the Barons, with his coate of armes". Another tournament is declared to celebrate Gaveston's marriage.

Against our friend the earle of Cornewall comes,
Weele haue a generall tilt and turnament,
And then his marriage shalbe solemnized.⁹¹

At the coronation of Prince Edward a touch of pageantry is introduced with the declaration of the King's Champion.

90. ll. 2475-7.

91. ll. 667-670.

If any Christian, Heathen, Turke, or Iew,
Dares but affirme that Edwards not true king,
And will auouche his saying with the sworde,
I am the Champion that will combate him.⁹²

Another touch of the past was the custom of eating together once a quarrel had been resolved. When Edward learns that the nobles have agreed to recall Gaveston from Ireland he declares a feast and invites all.

Lord Mortimer, we leave you to your charge
Now let us in and feast it roiallie.⁹³

This custom of rival parties ratifying agreements at a banquet table is not peculiarly medieval as this practice continues in our own time.

92. ll. 2368-71.

93. ll. 666-7.

LEARNING AND SCHOLARSHIP

There are only a few references to learning and scholarship in the text that would indicate a fourteenth century setting for the play. There can be little doubt that literacy was much higher in Marlowe's days than during the reign of King Edward, but Marlowe's nobles all appear to be educated men. Spencer, Mortimer and Edward quote Latin and nearly every character makes allusion to classical mythology. The most notable instance of this is the long list of mythological precedents for homosexual friendship enumerated by the elder Mortimer. To speak in this fashion argues an education and cultural background nearer to that of a Renaissance gentleman. However, there is one conspicuous omission--there is not a single Biblical allusion. Considering that this was a church-dominated age and one in which religious drama brought the facts of the Bible to all men, it is strange that Biblical allusions are absent. This omission may argue a point in Marlowe's favour as a craftsman.

For the Elizabethans the age of the Roman Church was an age of ignorance and superstition as is evidenced by this remark from Ascham's Scolemaster:

In our forefather's time, when papistry, as a standing pool, covered and overflowed all England. . .⁹⁴

If, therefore, ignorance, and chiefly ignorance about the "true religion" was fostered by the Roman Church it was clear that the dwellers of the fourteenth century could not know their Bible and therefore could not make any reference to it. By arguing thus, one may show how an absence of Biblical allusions is a help in dating the action of Edward II.

94. Ascham - The Scolemaster quoted in Golden Hind ed. Lamson and Smith, Norton and Coy. New York 1956, p. 107.

The attitudes towards the world, and how man should face the vicissitudes of life are clear enough in the play. There is the conventional division of life into the contemplative, and active life in the world. The attitude of patiently hearing all one's troubles and griefs is implied, if it is not specifically mentioned in the text. The stoic forbearance under all vicissitudes is a heritage from classical times, for in the midst of sorrow one can always find comfort in the imagination. This attitude of "my mind to me a kingdom is" is reflected in the advice given to Edward as a prisoner, by Leicester.

Be patient, good my lord, cease to lament.
Imagine Killingworth castle were your court,
And that you lay for pleasure here a space,
Not of compulsion or necessity.⁹⁵

This stoic acceptance of adversity is reflected again in the lines where Edward after his capture bids farewell to his friends.

Well, that shalbe, shalbe; part we must.
Sweete Spencer, gentle Baldocke, part we must.⁹⁶

Kocher speaking of religious thought in Edward II writes:

Religion appears almost solely in the farewells of the defeated as they go to their deaths. These evince scorn of the world and expectation of bliss in heaven, all in the best traditions of Christian handbooks on holy dying and de contemptu mundi.⁹⁷

This contemptus mundi was a popular concept in both Medieval and Renaissance times on one's death-bed. The Earl of Warwick when sentenced to death exclaims:

Tis but temporall that thou canst inflict.
Farewell, vaine worlde.⁹⁸

When Spencer is captured, he expresses great fortitude:

Edw. Spencer, o, sweet Spencer, thus then must we part.
Spenc. We must, my lord, so will the angry heavens.⁹⁹

Baldock expresses similar sentiments:

To die, sweet Spencer, therefore live wee all.
Spencer, all live to die, and rise to fall.¹⁰⁰

As has been mentioned, this was the conventional frame of mind in which one was supposed to meet death even in Tudor times. However,

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95. ll. 1954-57.
96. ll. 1930-1.
97. P. Kocher. C. Marlowe. Univ. of N. Carolina Press. 1946. p. 131.
98. ll. 1529, 1536.
99. ll. 1908-9.
100. ll. 1996-7.

one tends to think that Elizabethans had good reasons for not despising the world as much as their forefathers. True, that death was all around them but the Dance of Death was a creation of earlier ages. Even though the Tudors might have realized that in the midst of life we are in death, apparently they did not allow this concept unduly to restrain their activities.

CONCLUSION

Having thus examined the text of Edward II in an attempt to discover where Marlowe endeavours to give a historical perspective to his play we find that overtly there is comparatively little evidence. Marlowe had come a long way from the days of Tamburlaine Pt. I and his dramatic technique had acquired strength and subtlety. His basic story is medieval and one that his audience presumably was acquainted with in some measure. Edward II should have been remembered for two things if nothing else--he was the first Prince of Wales and the first English King who was forced to resign his crown. His military disasters with the Scotch and his diabolic murder were also events that were long remembered.

The facts of history, it is true, were changed and telescoped by Marlowe, but that was inevitable if he was to produce a play that could be acted in a normal period of time--Kent and the Queen are both made much older than they actually were when the events enacted took place, the Mortimers are given a greater share in the baronial revolt than Holinshed warrants and a few other details are changed. Marlowe also invented some things of his own, such as the scene where the Queen with Mortimer's aid persuades the nobles to recall Gaveston from exile and the character of Levune.

However, a close reading of the text shows that Marlowe did not forget that his play is set in the early fourteenth century and by the methods elaborated above throws out hints as to the historical perspective. Some of these indications are lost on a contemporary audience, but the Elizabethans would apparently understand Marlowe's intentions better.

This method of writing history plays and this play in particular is said by critics to have influenced Richard II.

More than at any other time he (Edward) speaks like a poet, as will speak Shakespeare's Richard II, who owes much to him.¹⁰¹

In every respect Marlowe prepared the way for Shakespeare's great historical tragedy Richard II, and not least in that he gave a new tragic significance to the de casibus theme of rise and fall which we have already noted in the Henry VI plays and in Richard III.¹⁰²

There is the same stress on conduct and the chivalric code of honour, the same social customs (the position of women), and the same political scheme as in Edward II. One must not forget that Edward II was great-grandfather to Richard II, so that they are not so far apart in time.

Finally, whatever history and historical perspective Marlowe may or may not have introduced one should not forget the fundamental motive for the writing of this play, and in a sense, of all plays. Marlowe wrote Edward II to be acted and wished to compose a successful play. That he found very promising material in English History and that there was a flourishing tradition in a genre that would accept historical drama was fortunate for Marlowe. Also it was fortunate that there was an audience prepared for the kind of play he was writing as there had already been many plays in the same tradition. There was a resurgence of the national spirit and a popular movement towards dramatizing events of national importance that were alive in the national memory. But after all this has been said, perhaps one should remind oneself that in the last analysis Edward II would be judged by Elizabethans, not for its historical realism or for the very chauvinistic material it contained, but by whether it gave them something to see, for which they would gladly pay money.

101. M. Poirier. C. Marlowe. Chatto and Windus 1951. p. 181.

102. I. Ribner. The Eng. History Play in the Age of Shakespeare. Princeton Univ. Press, 1957. p. 129.

CHAPTER IX

DOCTOR FAUSTUS

"We have no reason to doubt now that Dr. Faustus is the best of Marlowe's plays and that it belongs to the last year of his life".¹

"Dr. Faustus is Marlowe's greatest and most personal tragedy"²

"Never had his genius soared so high, whether in the art of verse or in the general conception of the play".³

"Dr. Faustus marks the floodtide of Marlowe's genius".⁴

High praise has been lavished on this drama by Marlowe not only in our own times but from the pens of genius of the past as well. Goethe's exclamation, "How greatly is it all planned!" is only too well known. Swinburne in his day also paid unstinting tribute to this work - "Of all the great poems in dramatic form it is perhaps the most remarkable of aim and simplicity of construction...few masterpieces of any age, in any language can stand beside this tragic poem for the qualities of terror and splendour, for intensity of purpose". It has also not been without its detractors. One fact however is beyond question - the tremendous popularity of this play from the day of its premiere featuring the great Edward Alleyn. Even in our own times for most people Marlowe's name is immediately associated with Dr. Faustus and within the last fifty years no other play by Marlowe has ever been revived. It is not insignificant that when Richard Burton was invited to stage a theatrical performance to raise funds for his alma mater - Cambridge - he chose to produce this play. It is also a point worth noting that the Faust story has

1. Rowse, A.L. Christopher Marlowe. Macmillan and Co., London. 1964. p. 147.

2. Henderson, P. Christopher Marlowe. Longmans, Green and Co., London. 1952. p. 127.

3. Poirier, M. Christopher Marlowe. Chatto & Windus, London. 1951. p. 145.

4. Norman, Charles. Christopher Marlowe. Macmillan & Co., N.Y. 1960. p. 125.

inspired many writers, Lessing, Goethe, Heine, Valery and Thomas Mann amongst others.

This unequalled popularity becomes all the more remarkable in the light of the great controversy over the text. There are two extant versions of the text, the earlier was printed in 1604 by Thomas Bushnell and reissued in 1609 and 1611. In 1616 John Wright published a new text which is longer by some 550 lines. It is fairly safe to assume that the later text included the additions made by William Birde and Samuel Rowley for which Henslowe paid them four pounds sterling. Textual scholars have spent gallons of ink trying to discover Marlowe's original in either or both of these versions, but the final word yet remains to be said. The beauty and power of the text as we have it today only serves to increase our regret that we cannot behold the original composition fresh from Marlowe's pen.

When investigating the sources that Marlowe consulted for his drama it is not long before one lights upon the most valuable of them. This is The History of the damnable life and deserved death of Dr. John Faustus translated into English by P.F.Cent. 1592. The original German volume was Historia von Johann Fausten printed at Frankfort 1587. The original of these tales has been traced back to a certain Johannes Faust of Simmern who held degrees from the University of Heidelberg in 1509. Around the life and dramatic death of this person there collected a host of legend, hear-say, rumour and fantasy, so that by the end of the century Johannes Faust was irretrievably submerged in the life and doings of the mythical Dr. Faustus. The fascination that magic, necromancy and the world of the spirits has held for the human mind is an eternal one. Faustus is but one in the long line of famous magicians who stopped at nothing to further their evil knowledge. Simon Magus who

is mentioned in Acts. Chapter 3 is one of the earliest of these miracle-makers who desired to increase his knowledge of the black arts. The Middle Ages were fertile soil for stories of magic and witchcraft, partly as a legacy from pagan times and partly as a result of their own ignorance and superstition. Many of these tales were grafted on to the mythical Dr. Faustus - mythical to modern scholars but very real indeed for the sixteenth century.

It may be mentioned here that German folk-lore and popular folk-tales had invaded England even earlier than "P.F.'s" translation appeared.

Some of the German folk-heroes had been introduced to English readers in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries: the foul boor Markolf, the ingenious and facetious parson Kalenberg, and the gross mocker and deceiver Howleglass, who is Ulenspiegel. They are among the books which in their day were read by all but scholars, and in our day are read by none but scholars.⁵

The fascination that the spiritual world of dark deeds exercises down to the present times may be seen in such varieties of literature as the Terror Novel of the late eighteenth century and in contemporary writings the popular comedy Blithe Spirit by Noel Coward and on the other side of the Atlantic The Rainmaker by Thornton Wilder.

For most of his play Marlowe relied heavily upon the German tale -- the Pope's banquet, the courtier's horns, the horse-corser and the forty dollar horse. All these are found in the original Faustbuch.

Most of the trivialities upon which Faustus spends himself between his damnation and his death, are brought into the play from the source.⁶

5. Wilson, F.P. Marlowe and the early Shakespeare. Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1953. p. 69.

6. Ibid., p. 69.

For dramatic sources and earlier models one has to search a while longer before one can find any antecedents. While Marlowe was yet an undergraduate Nathaniel Woodes' tragedy A Conflict of Conscience had been performed at Cambridge. This tells the story of an Italian Protestant who recanted his faith in order to save his life and property. As a result of this he was condemned to Hell. However one cannot be certain if Marlowe witnessed this drama.

Prof. Levin has taken pains to show that Rabelais had much earlier indicated the fatal consequences of science without conscience. This is contained in a letter by Gargantua to Pantagruel.

Gargantua's eulogy is tempered with the warning that science sans conscience - science without "consciousness" is but the ruin of the soul.⁷

Of course the Bible is full of references and stories warning against any dabbling with magic and the horrid end awaiting all over-aspiring souls.

However Marlowe does not merely retell in dramatic terms the old story of the fall of a practitioner of the black arts. His genius was too powerful not to make something uniquely original out of his source materials just as his brilliant successor Shakespeare was wont to do. Much of the German Faustbuch is a collection of silly pranks and the tales of magic are of a rather low order. The person of Faustus is more of a bragging and childish juggler than that of a man who commands reverence and loyalty. Dr. E.M. Butler's Myth of the Magus gives a detailed picture of the Germanic original of Marlowe's drama.

Marlowe has lifted both the central character and the incidents to a much higher spiritual and human plane. There is a magnitude and universality in the drama that is missing entirely from the

7. Levin, H. The Overreacher. Beacon Press, Boston. 1964. p. 108.

original. From merely an entertaining tale of an abnormal figure Marlowe has made it a deeply human story of cosmic proportions.

Further Marlowe was not content to depict a medieval morality with a neat theological message attached. Faustus is much more than merely a horrible example of what Christian souls must avoid. He is a great tragic character who commands pity and affection.

When one comes to an examination of the historical aspects of this drama there are two facets that demand attention. First, there is the predominant Christian theme and secondly the influence of Renaissance ideas that have permeated the basically religious fabric. When one examines the Christian aspects of this play in their historical perspective certain broad sub-divisions may be made for the sake of convenience. This play deals with the following concepts - God, Sin, Hell, and Christian Tragedy. One must examine each one of these separately in order to discover how far Marlowe was in agreement with the theology of his times. While engaged in this one must also remember that Marlowe was cognisant of both Roman Catholic and Protestant points of view thanks to his studies at Cambridge and from the discussions with Sir Walter Raleigh's coterie.

For the true Christian concept of God one must refer to Philip's question and Christ's reply.

Philip saith unto him, Lord, show us the Father, and it
sufficeth us,
Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long with you,
and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that
hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest
thou then, shew us the Father?⁸

In the person of Christ the Christian finds the fullest manifestation of godhead. However in this drama God is presented in a

8. St. John, ch. 14. v. 8-9.

different fashion having little of the Christ-like temperament.

Neither Faustus or any other character in the play so speaks of God as to make us really feel that he is a being who can love men and be loved by them. We are never persuaded that God is truly a Father who looks with tenderness on his erring children of the earth.⁹

The Good Angel speaks of "God's heavy wrath"¹⁰ and Lucifer argues, "Christ cannot save thy soul, for he is just".¹¹ Faustus thinks the same.

Homo fuge? Whither should I fly?
If unto God he'll throw mee down to hell.¹²

At the close of his life Faustus remarks.

But Faustus offence can ne'er be pardoned. The Serpent that tempted Eve may be sav'd but not Faustus.¹³

One notes that his mind continually harkens back to the Almighty judge of Mosaic Law. In his last agony Faustus cries

And see where God
Stretcheth out his arm, and bends his ireful brows:
Mountains and hills, come, come, and fall on me,
And hide me from the heavy wrath of God.¹⁴

The God of mercy and love is never introduced into the text by Marlowe.

God is always for Faustus the Hebrew law-giver, pitiless, just, mechanical and unimaginative.¹⁵

The tragedy of Faustus may be said to stem from this very ignorance of the true nature of God. In the Bible one reads in this connection:

Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.¹⁶

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9. Kecher, P. Christopher Marlowe. Russell and Russell Inc., N.Y. 1962. p. 118.
10. Tucker Brooks ed. The Works of Christopher Marlowe. Clarendon Press, Oxford. 1910. p. 149. l. 190.
11. Ibid., p. 168. l. 697.
12. Ibid., p. 161. l. 509-10.
13. Ibid., p. 191. l. 1371-72.
14. Ibid., p. 193. l. 1436-39.
15. Ellis-Fermor, U. Christopher Marlowe. Methuen and Co., London. 1927. p. 305.
16. II Corinthians. ch. 5. v. 17.

In accordance with this the church has formulated its teachings.

God created us to use our most noble possession,
our intelligence, in the best way of all, that is,
upon the noblest object, that is, upon Himself.
Hence the knowledge of God is at the root of our
true happiness.¹⁷

Because Faustus has a distorted concept of the powers and functions
of God he plunges to his ruin. Marlowe has brought this home very
forcibly throughout the play.

If this drama exhibits a hopelessly archaic picture of God on
the contrary, the concept of Hell is very modern indeed. Certainly
Marlowe was very much in advance of his times in this direction.
Even Milton does not measure up to Marlowe in his ideas about Hell.

Besides the many references to Gehenna in the words of Jesus,
St. Paul had affirmed the existence of Hell in no uncertain terms.

And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the
Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his
mighty angels,
In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know
not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus
Christ:
Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction
from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory
of his power.¹⁸

Both the Athanasian and Nicene Creeds affirm the existence of a
physical Hell. Pope Innocent III in a letter to Archbishop Humbert
of Arles wrote:

....the punishment of original sin is the lack of
the vision of God, but the punishment of actual
sin is the torment of everlasting hell.¹⁹

Canon Smith in his excellent compendium of Catholic belief writes
of Hell

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17. Smith, George D. The Teachings of the Catholic Church. Barnes
and Oates, London. 1948. p. 305.
18. II Thessalonians. ch. 1. v. 7-9.
19. Innocent III in Canon George Smith. The Teachings of the
Catholic Church. Barnes and Oates, London 1948. p. 1199.

The reality of "hell-fire", as the instrument of the pain of sense, has never been defined by a solemn decision of Pope or Council, making the denial of it formal heresy and punishing it by exclusion from the Church, but it is certainly contained in the Holy Scriptures, in the Fathers, and is practically the unanimous teaching of theologians...Hell is doubtless a place as well as a state. Such, at least is the most natural inference from the texts of Scripture and was always taken for granted within the Church, though one could not say that it was held as a part of divine revelation.²⁰

Both Calvin and Luther laid importance on the reality of Hell and in The Institutes of the Christian Religion, when dealing with predestination much emphasis was laid on Hell. That this was the belief of the Elizabethans cannot be questioned for we have numerous references to the eternal bonfire in contemporary literature. Greene in the story of his repentance noted:-

Thus was the liberty I got in my youth the cause of my licentious living in my age, and being the first step to hell.²¹

Jonson in his prayer to God the Father noted the conquest of Hell.

Sin, Death and Hell,
His glorious Name
Quite overcame.²²

The most famous of all the pictures of Hell is certainly to be found in Milton for whom Pandemonium was as real as the City of London.

However in Dr. Faustus one finds a startlingly modern concept. Hell is not a place, it does not appear as an under-ground torture chamber despite the vivid representation of Hell-mouth at the close of the play. Marlowe's view of hell is more intellectual and in a sense more spiritual. It is akin to Sartre's view as seen in In Camera or Shelagh Delaney's outburst in A Taste of Honey.

20. Ibid., p. 1185-86.

21. Greene, R. The Repentance of Robert Greene, M.A. in The Golden Hind ed. Lanson and Smith. 1942. p. 429.

22. Jonson, B. Hymn to God the Father. in Golden Hind. p. 768.

Heaven must be the hell of a place. Nothing but repentant sinners up there, is'nt it? All the pimps, prostitutes and politicians in creation trying to cash in on eternity and their little tin god!23

Hell is a state of being - a condition of mind and spirit rather than anything as childishy facile as a horrid punishment in the after-life. When Faustus questions Mephistopheles the reply is:-

Hell hath no limits, nor is circumscrib'd
In one self place, for where we are is hell,
And where hell is, must we ever be:
And to conclude, when all the world dissolves,
And every creature shall be purified,
All places shall be hell that is not heaven.24

And again when Mephistopheles tries to beg the question and Faustus refuses to be put off, Mephistopheles is forced to confess -

Why this is hell, nor am I out of it:
Think'st thou that I who saw the face of God,
And tasted the eternal joys of heaven,
Am not tormented with ten thousand hells,
In being deprived of everlasting bliss?25

The independent and far-seeing mind of Marlowe could not but be impatient with the accepted notions of Hell and modern theologians - Barth and Tillich - have upheld his views. The fact that he was accused by Richard Baines of holding the opinion "that the first beginning of Religion was only to keep men in awe" can be easily understood when one considers Marlowe's opinions on such basic matters of faith as Hell. In this context one finds that Marlowe was, historically speaking, very much in advance of his times and out of tune with orthodox Elizabethan belief.

The drama of Dr. Faustus is the story of the damnation of a human soul, therefore how and why this damnation occurs is of prime importance. The selling of a soul to Lucifer is the central event

23. DeLaney, Shelagh. A Taste of Honey. Methuen and Co., London. 1959. p. 42.

24. Tucker Brooke ed. The Works of Christopher Marlowe. Clarendon Press, Oxford. 1910. p. 163. l. 553-58.

25. Ibid., p. 155. l. 312-316.

of the play and in assessing this play in a historical^{frame}/of reference one must look at Faustus's sin as Marlowe's contemporaries would.

Sin broadly speaking is man's turning away from God. In turning away from God man generally turned towards himself or to some object created by himself. St. Augustine had put it thus -

Sin is the love of self to the contempt of God.²⁶
and again

If the soul should move to produce a false imitation of God, and to will to take pleasure in its own power, then the greater it wishes to become, the less it becomes in fact. And that is pride, the beginning of all sin; and the beginning of the pride of man is to fall off from God.²⁷

Melanchthon the Humanist had defined sin as "a depraved affection, a depraved motion of the heart against the law of God".²⁸ Aside from the obvious giving of his soul to the devil rather than to God Faustus throughout the play shuts his ears to the voice of heaven - the Vulgate, the Good Angel, the Old Man and the young students all appeal to him in vain. Faustus has his eyes and heart fixed elsewhere.

Thomas Aquinas further commented on sin thus:-

Now in actual sin there is, first, the turning away from God, the corresponding punishment being the loss of the beatific vision; and secondly, the inordinate cleaving to some created good, and the punishment corresponding with this is the pain of sense.²⁹

Mephistopheles exhibits the first kind of sin and its corresponding punishment and that is why he confesses that he carries his hell about with him. Faustus' inordinate thirst for knowledge, even that

26. St. Augustine in The Teachings of the Catholic Church. Canon George Smith. Burns and Oates, London. 1948, p. 50.

27. St. Augustine. De libero arbitrio. trans. John H.S. Burleigh. Westminster Press, Philadelphia. 1953. p. 195.

28. Melanchthon. in "Dr. Faustus of Wittenberg". Clifford Davidson. Studies in Philology. 1962. vol. 59. p. 516.

29. St. Thomas Aquinas in The Teachings of the Catholic Church. Canon C. Smith. Barnes and Oates, London. 1948. p. 357.

knowledge forbidden by the Law of God, is an example of the second kind of sin and his eventual end is an example of the pain of sense.

Pride is the cardinal and fundamental sin. In the procession of Seven Sins, Pride is given first place.

Yes, all of you be subject to another and be
clothed with humility: for God resisteth the
proud, and giveth grace to the humble.
Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty
hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time.³⁰

Faustus' pride is the pride of wisdom and knowledge; proud of his mastery of the four great branches of learning he is impatient and discontented. He wants yet more knowledge come what may and feels that none deserve to know more than he himself. He has forgotten "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge".³¹

This theme is stated in the opening lines by the Chorus.

Till swollen with cunning of a self-conceit,
His waxen wings did mount above his reach
And melting heavens conspired his overthrow.³²

Faustus dismisses Aristotle with superior scorn

A greater subject fitteth Faustus' wit.³³

Law on the other hand is "too servile and illiberal for me".³⁴ All his studies have fallen short of the mark because he feels-

Yet art thou still but Faustus and a man.³⁵

Magic makes an appeal to him precisely because it lifts him above mankind

A sound Magician is a mighty god:
Here Faustus try thy brains to gain a diety.³⁶

The Evil Spirit reads his proud aspirations correctly and says to

30. 1. Peter. ch. 5. v. 5-6.

31. Proverbs. ch. 1. v. 7.

32. Tucker Brooke ed. The Works of Christopher Marlowe. Clarendon Press, Oxford. 1910. p. 146. l. 20-22.

33. Ibid., p. 147. l. 41.

34. Ibid., p. 148. l. 64.

35. Ibid., p. 147. l. 51.

36. Ibid., p. 148. l. 90-91.

him -

Be thou on earth as Jove is in the skies
Lord and commander of these Elements.³⁷

Faustus' pride is akin to that of the parents of humanity, Adam and Eve, who were not content to live according to the will of God and wanted more than was allowed.

A new Lucifer, he has hankered after a god-like omnipotence. A new Adam, he has tasted the fruit of the forbidden tree, claimed to know what God has decided to conceal from His creatures.³⁸

St. Augustine was taught at Cambridge in Elizabethan days as the "prince of theologians". In his writings he had repeatedly pointed out that Pride was at the root of human wrongdoing. Marlowe had ample opportunity to study this at Corpus Christi. The impatience and chafing at limits posed by Divine Law is one of the most significant aspects of Pride. The Old Testament is full of examples of those who put themselves before the Word of God and suffered as a consequence.

Faustus' impatience is seen from the very start.

Philosophy is odious and obscure,
Both Law and Physic are for petty wits,
Divinity is basest of the three,
Unpleasant, harsh, contemptible and vile,
'Tis Magic, Magic that hath ravish'd me.³⁹

So intoxicated is he at the possession of forbidden lore that he glories in the fact that he can command spirits. In this context one must keep in mind the Elizabethan use of the word "spirit", which always meant an evil spirit.

How pliant is this Mephistophilis?
Full of obedience and humility,
Such is the force of Magic and my spells.⁴⁰

37. Ibid., p. 149. l. 104-05.

38. Poirier, M. Christopher Marlowe. Chatto and Windus, London. 1951. p. 141.

39. Tucker Brooks ed. The Works of Christopher Marlowe. Clarendon Press, Oxford. 1910. p. 150. l. 134-38.

40. Ibid., p. 154. l. 264-66.

The use that Faustus makes of his superhuman powers all subtly indicate his desire to break the boundaries of human limits - he flies around the globe visiting distant lands, he becomes invisible while at Rome, he produces the past for the Emperor, he procures grapes for the Duchess when it is January in Wittenberg. He is always exercising his powers in a flamboyant defiance of the rules of common living. He seems drunk with the arrogance of his new and forbidden knowledge. This attitude was warned against by many sixteenth and seventeenth century writers. In Tyndale's Prologue to his Reader he specifically stated:-

I thought it my duty most dear reader to warn thee before and to show thee the right way in, to give thee the true key to open it withal, and to arm thee against false prophets and malicious hypocrites, whose perpetual study is to leaven the scriptures with glozes, and there to lock it up where it should save thy soul and to make us shoot at a wrong mark to put our trust in those things that profit their bellies only and slay our souls.⁴¹

Donne in a sermon at the funeral of Sir William Cokayne, Dec. 12. 1626, spoke earnestly against the seeking after false knowledge.

And if there be any addition to knowledge, it is rather a new knowledge than a greater knowledge; rather a singularity in a desire of proposing something that was not known before than an improving, an advancing, a multiplying of former inceptions; and by that means, no knowledge comes to be perfect.⁴²

Luther and Melancthon in Germany and Calvin in Switzerland saw magic and sorcery as damned and evil. Thus both the Protestant and Catholic thinkers condemned Faustus for wanting to be more than was allotted to man and for trying to reach this position by unlawful means.

41. Tyndale, W. Prologue to the Reader in Golden Hind. ed. Lampson and Smith, N.Y. 1956. p. 45.

42. Donne, J. Sermons in Golden Hind. p. 830.

Faustus is no longer content to study such things as physical causes, instead he now desires to control the elements in the way diabolical powers are able to control them.⁴³

The fact that Pride turned man aside from his proper goal was repeatedly written about. All Elizabethans were aware that the true end of all the arts and sciences was God. Ascham in the preface to The Scholemaster wrote

In writing this book I have had earnest respect to three points: truth of religion, honesty in living, right order in learning.⁴⁴

Eight years later in 1578 in Lyly's best-seller Euphues: the Anatomy of Wit the old gentleman of Naples holds up the precept-

Serve God, love God, fear God, and God will so bless thee as either heart can wish or thy friends desire.⁴⁵

Queen Elizabeth ordered that certain homilies and intercessions be read every Sunday in the churches. One of these was a prayer on the sin of pride.

Of our going from God, the wise man sayeth, that pride was the first begining: for by it man's heart was turned from God his maker. For pride is the foundation of all sin: he that hath it shall be full of cursings, and at the end it shall overthrow him⁴⁶

Marlowe being a Parker scholarship holder must have had many occasions to hear this. The evidence of this play would indicate that he held the view of St. Augustine

Whereas the voluptuous man seeks after what is beautiful, melodious, sweet or smooth, the curious man seeks after the very opposite of these; not however that he may be vexed by them, but merely out of the lust to experience and to know.⁴⁷

Critics have repeatedly analysed the text of Dr. Faustus and come to the same conclusion. Faustus lusts after wealth, power and

43. Davidson, Clifford. "Dr. Faustus of Wittenberg". in Studies in Philology. vol. 59. 1962. p. 515.

44. Ascham, R. The Scholemaster in The Golden Hind. p. 83.

45. Lyly, J. Euphues: the Anatomy of Wit in The Golden Hind. p. 213.

46. Cole, D. Evil and Suffering in the Plays of Christopher Marlowe. Princeton University Press, N.J. 1962. footnote p. 195.

pleasure rather than seeking the kingdom of heaven. "There is ample evidence of this in the drama. Speaking of his dominion over the spirit world he says:-

I'll have them fly to India for gold,
Ransack the Ocean for orient pearl,
And search all corners of the new found world
For pleasant fruits and princely delicates.⁴⁸

Patriotism as vaunted by Faustus is only thinly disguised ambition.

...chase the Prince of Parma from our land,
And reign sole king of all our provinces.⁴⁹

and again Faustus says

I'll join the hills that bind the Afric shore
And make that country continent to Spain,
And both contributory to my crown:
The Emperor shall not live but by my leave,
Nor any potentate in Germany.⁵⁰

One of the first things Faustus desires after signing the contract for his soul is the satisfaction of his animal desires.

But leaving off this, let me have a wife, the fairest
maid in Germany, for I am wanton and lascivious, and
cannot live without a wife.⁵¹

Faustus is not deceived about himself and he knows that his mind is set upon the acquisition and mastery of things of this world. A line pregnant with meaning is his own confession

The god thou servest is thine own appetite.⁵²

Faustus had forgotten or deliberately ignored the admonition of Christ

Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth
where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves
break through and steal:

48. Tucker Brooke ed. The Works of Christopher Marlowe. Clarendon Press, Oxford. 1910. p. 149. l. 110-13.

49. Ibid., p. 149. l. 121-22.

50. Ibid., p. 156. l. 343-47.

51. Ibid., p. 163-4. l. 572-4.

52. Ibid., p. 159. l. 443.

But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven,
Where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and
where thieves do not break through nor steal:
For where your treasure is, there will your heart
be also.⁵³

Faustus is entirely self-centered as his aspirations indicate.

All things that move between the quiet poles
Shalbe at my command, Emperors and kings
Are but obeyed in their several provinces:
Nor can they raise the wind, or rend the clouds:
But his dominion that exceeds in this,
Stretcheth as far as doth the mind of man.⁵⁴

One must therefore conclude as Prof. Farnham does that Faustus loses his soul in the hope of gaining the whole world.

The truly consuming desire in Faustus is for knowledge that shall transcend the limitations of the imperfect world...His worldly presumption has led him to seek the easy pleasures of knowledge which are of the mind, instead of the difficult satisfactions of wisdom, which are of the spirit.⁵⁵

Marlowe, one must remember, held both a Bachelor's and a Master's Degree from Cambridge and this means that he had to study a good deal of religion and philosophy. Dr. Faustus clearly shows how thorough and accurate his study had been and how fully informed he was on theological matters. So far the sins of pride that have been listed are all the conventional ones. They are very deep and evil but they do not irrevocably shut the door against salvation. Most of mankind has at some time or another put aside the kingdom of God for other less spiritual gains. Such sins may be forgiven even at the very last e.g. the dying thief upon the cross. But Pride goes even further and brings forth that sin from which there is no salvation.

53. St. Matthew. ch. 6. v. 19-21.

54. Tucker Brooke ed. The Works of Christopher Marlowe. Clarendon Press, Oxford. 1910. p. 148. l. 84-89.

55. Farnham, W. The Medieval Heritage of Elizabethan Tragedy. Basil Blackwell, Oxford. 1956. p. 402.

Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.⁵⁶

This fearful sin is the sin of despair. The word "despair" occurs again and again like a chilling lietmotif throughout the text of Dr. Faustus. As the position of the protagonist grows more desperate the frequency of the word increases.

The opposite of intellectual pride is despair, and it is because of his despair that Faustus is damned.⁵⁷

This despair makes Faustus turn aside from his natural thirst for allowed knowledge and seek the world of magic. It is this despair that makes him bid "Divinity adieu!" This despair makes him juggle with the texts in the Vulgate. In both instances he reads only half the statement and thus comes to the position of resigned fatalism, of che sera sera. The two texts are

Stipendium enim peccati mors; gratis autem Dei, vita aeterna, in Christo Jesu, Domino nostro.

(For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Rom.6.23.)

Si dixerimus quoniam peccatum non habemus, ipsi nos sedicimus, et veritas in nobis non est. Si confiteamur peccata nostra, fidelis est et justus, ut remittat nobis peccata nostra et emundet nos ab omni iniquitate.

(If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 1.John.ch.1.v.8-9.)

In the play over and over again Faustus falls into the pernicious

56. St. Matthew. ch. 12. v. 31-32.

57. Henderson, P. Christopher Marlowe. Longmans, Green and Co., London. 1952. p. 128.

attitude of despair. Just before Mephitopheles comes with the contract Faustus muses:-

Now Faustus must thou needs be damned,
And canst thou not be saved?
What boots it then to think of God or heaven?
Away with such vain fancies and despair,
Despair in God and trust in Beelzebub.⁵⁸

A few moments after obtaining his heart's desire he confesses

And long ere this I should have slain myself,
Had not sweet pleasure conquered deep despair.⁵⁹

After playing a trick on the horse-courser Faustus recollects :-

What art thou Faustus but a man condemn'd to die?
Thy fatal time doth draw to final end,
Despair doth drive distrust into my thoughts,
Confound these passions with a quiet sleep.⁶⁰

To the saintly Old Man he declares

Damned art thou Faustus, damned, despair and die.⁶¹

In the farewell discourses with his scholars and students Marlowe has a veiled allusion to the farewell discourses of Christ at the Last Supper. But whereas Christ prepared to face his final agonies with fortitude and comforted his friends, Faustus can only preach sorrow and the loss of hope.

But Faustus' offence can ne'er be pardoned. The Serpent that tempted Eve may be saved, but not Faustus...and what wonders I have done all Germany can witness, yea all the world, for which Faustus hath lost both Germany, and the world, yea heaven itself, heaven the seat of God, the throne of the blessed, the kingdom of joy, and must remain in hell forever - hell, ah hell, forever.⁶²

Later he warns his friends not to interfere "for nothing can rescue me".⁶³

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58. Tucker Brooke ed. The Works of Christopher Marlowe. Clarendon Press, 1910. p. 158. l. 433-37.
59. Ibid., p. 166. l. 635-36.
60. Ibid., p. 183. l. 1143-46.
61. Ibid., p. 188. l. 1286.
62. Ibid., p. 191. l. 1371-81.
63. Ibid., p. 192. l. 1413.

Theologically speaking here one sees how Faustus shuts his heart to the mercy and love of God. He glories that his sin is too great for even God to be able to forgive.

His(Faustus) second sin is more greivous still, since it is the only one that cannot be forgiven, the sin against the Holy Ghost, the sin of Judas, despair in its theological meaning...Why should he pray, convinced as he is that his prayer cannot be heard.⁶⁴

The theological implication of despair is the refusal of grace. Man by his own efforts and merit was not capable of saving himself, so God in His generosity took it upon himself to atone for and save mankind. This saving grace was freely given to all who cared to accept it.

My little children, these things I write unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:
And he is the propitiation for our sin: and not only ours, but also for the sins of the whole world.⁶⁵

Faustus is constantly reminded of his sin by the Angel, by the Old Man and in his conversations with Mephistopheles he often comes to a sense of personal conviction of sin. But he never once begs for God's saving grace. The necessity of this had been expressed in other Tudor writings.

Ere sleep shall close up thy eye too fast, do not thy God forget,
But search within thy secret thoughts, what deeds did thee befall;
And if thou find amiss in aught, to God for mercy call.⁶⁶

Donne in his Holy Sonnets had also begged for God's grace.

But who am I, that dare dispute with thee,
O God? O! of thine only worthy blood,
And my tears, make a heavenly Lethean flood,
And drown in it my sin's black memory
That thou remember them, some claim as debt;
I think it mercy if thou wilt forget.⁶⁷

64. Poirier, M. Christopher Marlowe. Chatto and Windus, London.1951. p. 142.

65. 1.John.ch.2.v.1-2.

66. Gascoigne, George. Gascoigne's Goodnight. in The Golden Hind. p. 188.

67. Donne, J. Holy Sonnets. in The Golden Hind. p. 827.

This is the perennial theme of Christian life - God and Satan claiming human life and God winning by the power of love. As recently as 1965 one finds James Baldwin expressing the same idea.

"But that's the Devil's price, too," said Elisha. "The Devil, he don't ask for nothing less than your life. And he take it too, and it's lost forever. Forever, Johnny. You in darkness while you living and you in darkness when you dead. Aint nothing but the love of God can make the darkness light".⁶⁸

Nothing can save a soul which resolutely denies all salvation. This is very clearly and dramatically brought out in the famous closing soliloquy in Dr. Faustus. Faustus is in an agony of fear and remorse, but yet his stubborn pride keeps him from the humility that is a vital requisite for salvation. He blames his parents for his birth, he curses Time for not standing still. He even wishes to forfeit his humanity and be changed into an animal or even to a vapour. John Bunyan confessed to a similar temptation in Grace Abounding.

The beasts, birds, fishes, etc., I blessed their condition, for they had not a sinful nature, they were not obnoxious to the wrath of God; they were not to go to hell-fire after death; I could therefore have rejoiced, had my condition been as any of theirs.⁶⁹

But never once does Faustus go on his knees to pray the Agnus Dei. He is conscious only of the wrath of God and doggedly sticks to his contract with the devil. Once having signed away his soul he turns his back on all paths that lead back to God. His despair is of the flamboyantly narrow kind that believes once having done wrong one might as well make the most of it as God's hand is irrevocably raised against one. This, as has been argued, is nothing else but a psychological inversion of pride as the case-books of psychiatry

68. Baldwin, James. Go Tell it on the Mountain. Dell Books, N.Y. 1965. p. 96.

69. Bunyan, John. Grace Abounding in Restoration Literature: Poetry and Prose. ed. Cecil A. Moore. N.Y. 1934. p. 283.

would illustrate.

Lastly, in an examination of the fall of Faustus, Marlowe has not omitted that snare which is almost inevitably linked with Pride. This is the trap of Pleasure. It has already been seen that the knowledge Faustus craves for he dissipates in empty pleasures. It is hardly becoming for the greatest scholar of Wittenberg to employ his wisdom in disturbing a Vatican banquet or in producing grapes out of season. He bargains with his soul for earthly pleasures and asks Mephistopheles to convey this message to his master.

Say, he surrenders up to him his soul,
So he will spare him 24 years,
Letting him live in all voluptuousness.⁷⁰

Faustus thanks Mephistopheles kindly when the latter promises:-

I'll cull thee out the fairest courtesans,
And bring them ev'ry morning to thy bed.
She whom thy eye shall like, thy heart shall have.⁷¹

He further confesses that all repentance has been forgotten in pleasure.

And long ere this I should have slain myself,
Had not sweet pleasure conquered deep despair.⁷²

This lust for earthly beauty and pleasure finds its ultimate symbol and fulfilment in the vision of Helen. She symbolises the pagan world where the cult of Beauty was the highest end of man. She was the cause of the greatest event of classical times and Faustus' address to her indicates the very high position she occupies.

And all is dress that is not Helena.⁷³

For Christian Europe of the sixteenth century Helen was not

70. Tucker Brooke ed. The Works of Christopher Marlowe. Clarendon Press, Oxford. 1910. p. 156. l. 327-29.

71. *Ibid.*, p. 164. l. 585-87.

72. *Ibid.*, p. 166. l. 635-36.

73. *Ibid.*, p. 189. l. 1334.

only the great heroine of the classics but the symbol of those earthly passions and desires which bring about the destruction of men and nations as the actual Helen did for Troy.

Helen is the lust of the eyes and of the flesh, both as these are objects in an external world, other than Faustus; and as they are his own passions, leading him to seek within those objects a happiness.⁷⁴

Prof. Greg finds yet another meaning in the vision of Helen. She is clearly a spirit, using the word in its pejorative Elizabethan sense. This is made obvious from the earlier description of Alexander and his paramour. Faustus in his crazed lust or blind despair, or a desperate mixture of the two, commits the fatal sin of demonality with Helen. It is significant that the Old Man urges Faustus to repent before Helen appears.

Ah stay good Faustus, stay thy desperate steps,
I see an Angel hovers o'er thy head,
And with a vial full of precious grace
Offers to pour the same into thy soul,
Then call for mercy and avoid despair.⁷⁵

But after witnessing the meeting between Faustus and Helen and hearing Faustus cry, "And none but thou shalt be my paramour!"⁷⁶ the Old Man turns away cursing because he recognises the inevitable.

Accursed Faustus, miserable man
That from thy soul exclud'st the grace of heaven
And fliest the throne of his tribunal seat.⁷⁷

Thus Marlowe has traced the growth and development of Faustus' sin with unerring theological understanding. Beginning with pride in his powers and impatience with his human limitations Faustus proceeds to damn himself by flouting God, then hardening his heart with despair and shutting his ears to the call of Grace and finally

74. Smith, J. "Marlowe's Dr. Faustus". in Scrutiny. vol. 8. June. 1939. p. 39.

75. Tucker Brooke ed. The Works of Christopher Marlowe. Clarendon Press, Oxford. 1910. p. 188. l. 1290-94.

76. Ibid., p. 190. l. 1347.

77. Ibid., p. 190. l. 1348-50.

in attempting to drown misery, fear and desperation in pleasure. In tracing this movement one cannot help but note how psychologically accurate is Marlowe's design. One might be tempted to anachronistically assume that Marlowe had made the acquaintance of Freud. The whole action of the play can be summed up in a single Biblical verse from St. Matthew's Gospel.

For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and shall lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?⁷⁸

It is interesting to note here that in his much fuller version Goethe gives a very different picture of the sins of Faustus. Satan asks permission of God to test Faustus and to sift his virtue, thus making him a Job-like figure.

Mephistopheles: What will you bet? There's still a chance to gain him,
If unto me full leave you give,
Gently upon my road to train him!

The Lord: As long as he on earth shall live,
So long I make no prohibition.⁷⁹

Seen in this light Marlowe seems to be writing nothing more original than an orthodox medieval exemplum. Faustus appears to be a man who by his own wilfulness and unbridled desires brings doom upon his own head. There are all the conventional trappings of a sententious Chorus, the machinery of rival angels and conniving devils, the attractive Seven Sins and the moral pleadings of the Old Man.

The only one of Marlowe's plays which is cast in a deliberately Christian context is Dr. Faustus.⁸⁰

78. St. Matthew. ch. 16. v. 26.

The New English Bible translates this verse thus:- "What will a man gain by winning the whole world, at the cost of his true self? Or what can he give that will buy that self back?" In this rendition the central idea of Dr. Faustus becomes only too obvious.

79. Goethe, W. Faust. trans. Bayard Taylor. World's Classics No. 380 p. 10. l. 70-75.

80. Ribner, I. "Marlowe's Tragical Glasse". in Essays on Shakespearean and Elizabethan Drama. ed. Richard Hosley. Routledge and Kegan Paul. London. 1963. p. 108.

But Marlowe was not content to write a moral fable cast in a conventional mould. His understanding of Christianity and Christian tragedy was a deep and sympathetic one. He seems to say in dramatic terms what W.H. Auden has said more plainly in our own times - "What a pity it had to be this way when it might have been otherwise".⁸¹

Faustus for all his wisdom could have been one of the leading lights of Christendom, but by choosing the path of self he lost everything. Those things he desires above all else, knowledge of the world, are not evil in themselves. But rather than receive this knowledge through the medium God has ordained he plunges forward by unholy means. The means he uses and the exercise of his powers damn him. His knowledge is knowledge without grace, without faith, without the blessing which should be an integral part of all true knowledge.

Power and wealth, all that Faustus hitherto has obtained, are not in themselves good or bad; and so long as they are contemplated merely, he need not be disturbed. But once the attempt is made to use them, disillusion begins.⁸²

Faustus is later faced with the horrible truth that the gifts of the devil neither satisfy nor last, and that ultimately he has sold his soul for even less than a mess of pottage. Marlowe has made fullest use of the dramatic form to express this. One of the first things Faustus desires is a wife - a permanent bond of love in marriage. But this is refused as marriage is a sacrament and thus against the dictates of Hell. He asks for books on astronomy and botany, and everything in them only serves to remind Faustus of what

81. Auden, W.H. "The Christian Tragic Hero". in New York Times Book Review. Dec. 16, 1945. p. 57.

82. Smith, James. "Marlowe's Dr. Faustus". in Scrutiny. vol. 8. June, 1939. p. 42.

he has lost. The fruit of all this knowledge is purile activity and schoolboy's pranks that smack of the heroics found in comic books. There is nothing constructive or edifying, Faustus does not seek to leave the world a better place than he found it. His knowledge is barren and contaminated. His Biblical opposite is Solomon.

It is worth noting that in the same year that Dr. Faustus made its appearance Greene wrote his first rule for good living.

First, in all your actions, set God before your eyes, for the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.⁸³

And Donne wrote of the inevitability of reliance on Divine mercy.

For, if above all these, my sins abound,
'Tis late to ask abundance of thy grace,
When we are there; here on thy lowly ground,
Teach me how to repent; for that's as good
As if thou hadst sealed my pardon with thy blood.⁸⁴

Prof. Ribner has succinctly summed up Marlowe's pronouncement on the theme of Christian tragedy thus:-

The tragedy lies in that what Faustus receives in exchange for his soul is finally worthless, that wealth, power and sensual pleasure are revealed to him as having only delusory value which disappears as soon as they are possessed.⁸⁵

When one studies the text of Dr. Faustus one cannot help realising that it is much more than merely an expression of orthodox Christianity. Marlowe was no orthodox believer and in all his plays presents subtle intellectual values. The Renaissance with all its humanism and secularism may also be found alongside the more conventional religious pattern. Nicholas Berdayev has pointed out what the influx of humanism meant for the European intellectual e.g. Dr. Faustus.

83. Greene, R. Greene's Groat'sworth of Wit. in The Golden Hind. p. 424.

84. Donne, J. Holy Sonnets. in The Golden Hind. p. 826.

85. Ribner, I. "Marlowe's Tragick Glasse". in Essays on Shakespearean and Elizabethan Drama. ed. Richard Hosley. Routledge and Kegan Paul, London. 1963. p. 111.

The humanist consciousness, which was the result of the double communion with nature and antiquity, diverted its contemplation from the image of the spiritual man to that of the natural man...The discovery of his natural forces and of a new consciousness upon their basis inspired man with a youthful confidence in himself and his creative possibilities. Man's forces appeared to be boundless and there seemed to exist no limits to human creation either in art or science, political or social life.⁸⁶

This spirit is very akin to that of Faustus'. The aspiration for the infinite and superhuman, the urge of immortal longings pulsates throughout the play. The impatience with restrictions on human creativity is a significant symbol of the Renaissance.

O what a world of profit and delight,
Of power, of honour, of omnipotence
Is promised to the studious Artizan.⁸⁷

Faustus is in the tradition of Roger Bacon who pioneered experimental science as against all earlier principles of inquiry. Like Francis Bacon, Faustus too, takes all knowledge as his province - Law, Philosophy, Medicine, and Religion - and impatiently asks about Botany, Astrology and Meta-physics. His thirst for knowledge is insatiable. Thus to look upon Faustus as an up-dated morality Everyman would be to only see less than half the picture.

He is not called Dr. Faustus of Wittenberg for nothing. Wittenberg is not merely a sonorous German place-name to round off an attractive title, but the spirit of Wittenberg is woven into the play much more so than in Hamlet, who was also a student at the same university. Wittenberg was a cradle of the Reformation movement and both Luther and Melancthon had lived there at various times. The spirit of the Reformation is very much in evidence in this play.

86. Berdayev, N. The Meaning of History, Geoffrey C. Les, London. 1949. p. 132.

87. Tucker Brooke ed. The Works of Christopher Marlowe. Clarendon Press, Oxford. 1910. p. 148. l. 81-83.

There is the obviously anti-Catholic scene of the discomfiture of the Pope and his cardinals. This was bound to have made a strong appeal in the theatre, particularly with the groundlings. The whole attitude of Faustus is anti-Catholic and is revealed in such significant gestures as the rejection of the Vulgate.

Again one finds the growth of nationalism alluded to in the text.

And chase the Prince of Parma from our land.⁸⁸

Those potentates whom Faustus pleases are both notably Protestant. Throughout the play one is constantly reminded that Faustus is a German scholar rooted in the intellectual climate of Protestant Germany.

The other significant Renaissance aspect is the great admiration for the pagan past. When in Rome special mention is made by Faustus of those monuments "which Julius Caesar brought from Africa"⁸⁹. Again it is significant that of all the great figures of antiquity, Charles chooses to see Alexander rather than some Christian saint or hero.

Amongst which kings is Alexander the great,
Chief spectacle of the world's pre-eminence,
The bright shining of whose glorious acts
Lightens the world with his reflecting beams.⁹⁰

This attitude finds its highest expression in the apostrophe to Helen. She symbolises the greatest beauty and glory of the ancient world.

Enamoured of ancient wisdom, he (Faustus) prizes the aesthetic value of classical civilization. He looks upon the ancient world as the sole fountainhead of all beauty.⁹¹

88. Ibid., p. 149. l. 121.

89. Ibid., p. 173. l. 345.

90. Ibid., p. 180. l. 1035-38.

91. Poirier, M. Christopher Marlowe. Chatto and Windus, London. 1951. p. 131.

When one comes to examine Faustus' learning in the light of Renaissance precepts one finds that Marlowe was very much a man of his own times. While at Cambridge Marlowe had read rhetoric in the first year, dialectics in the second and philosophy in the third. He also had to study biblical and classical history. For his M.A. he had to study, in addition to the above, astronomy, elementary Greek, geometry and science. Having obtained the highest degree in the land Marlowe was in a good position to estimate the learning of Faustus. Faustus was master of not merely one, but of all four branches of knowledge that comprised a sixteenth century university. And yet Faustus is a failure because he has forgotten the foundation of all knowledge as given by Sidney - "The end of all earthly learning being virtuous action".

A few noteworthy principles governed the Elizabethan concept of learning, and these were thought to embrace everything that would contribute to happy living. These principles included the pursuit of self-knowledge, faith in man's spiritual destiny, the acceptance of responsibility to society, and proof of wisdom in conduct. In brief, the end of learning was to prepare individuals for better service to both God and state.⁹²

That Faustus falls well below the above mark is evident. He mistakes disputation as the end of logic, not the truth. He rejects law as a drudge and medicine because it cannot make man immortal. His reason is clouded so he mistakes the true end of every discipline. When he quibbles with the Scriptures he chooses to deal with half-truths as he reads only those portions which suit his purpose. And in the final soliloquy he refuses to accept personal responsibility for his own sins. This very pointedly emphasises Faustus' lack of

92. McCullen, Joseph T. "Dr. Faustus and Renaissance Learning". in Modern Language Review. vol. 51. 1956. p. 7.

learning by Renaissance standards. His pride is akin to that of Walter Raleigh who wrote-

But for myself, I should never be persuaded that God hath shut up all light of learning within the lantern of Aristotle's brains.⁹³

Lastly in examining the Renaissance elements in this play nearly every critic has emphasised the humanism of the text. The whole drama is a flamboyant manifesto of Renaissance humanism. The play does not preach submission to divine law but is consistently advocating skeptic intellectual inquiry. A fine compliment in attitude is Shakespeare's Macbeth where a moral order and harmony in the universe is distinctly affirmed.

Marlowe's Dr. Faustus is not a Christian morality play for it contains no affirmation of the goodness or justice of the religious system it depicts with such accuracy of detail. It is, rather, a protest against this system, which it reveals as imposing a limitation on the aspirations of man, holding him in subjection and bondage, denying him at last even the comfort of Christ's blood and dooming him to the most terrible destruction.⁹⁴

Humanism with its elevation of man as the centre of the universe went so far as to even shatter the concept of man as an image of the Divine. This explains to some extent the picture of God in this play. Faustus' God is in the image of Faustus - hard, relentless and passionate. The medievalist had attempted to live within both the City of God and the City of Man simultaneously and to synchronise the two. The humanist forgot one half of St. Augustine's vision and concentrated all his energies on the other half.

To the medieval mind earlier, as to the baroque imagination later, life appeared as a shadow cast

93. Raleigh, W. The History of the World. in The Golden Hind. p. 511.

94. Ribner, I. "Marlowe's Tragick Glasse". in Essays on Shakespearean and Elizabethan Drama. ed. Richard Hosley. Routledge and Kegan Paul. London. 1963. p. 109.

by eternity's ring of light; but to the men of the Renaissance, it resembled a sparrow's flight through a brightly lit hall on a winter's evening, out of darkness and into darkness at the last.⁹⁵

This basic difference is at the root of Faustus' tragedy. He is a man - and many believe this to be autobiographical - who was torn between two worlds. The world of faith and the world of unbelief struggle for possession of Faustus and his soul is torn apart in the conflict.

Renaissance and Christianity are not merely opposed, they are in desperate incompatibility; the arena itself endures the conflict it should harmonise. Poetry, vice, the occult and science stand on one side and religion on the other, in mutual exclusion...In Dr. Faustus two ages clash.⁹⁶

In this sense Marlowe is again very much ahead of his times as he realised that humanism eventually leads to the total disintegration of the human personality. He comes close to the point made by Matthew Arnold about man lying between an unborn and a dead world. Even more contemporary writers, O'Neill, Tennessee Williams, Osborne and the French Existentialists have all built plays on man's crucial position of belonging nowhere. Faustus' downfall becomes the tragedy of a great aspiring soul not the fall of a mean personality.

It is the downfall of a Prometheus and not the homecoming to Hell of a depraved creature.⁹⁷

Erich Heller has admirably summed up the position of the modern man.

Wherever he sees an avenue, he will explore it - regardless of the triviality or the disaster to which it leads; wherever he sees the chance of a new departure, he will take it - regardless of the desolation left behind. He is so unsure of what ought to be known that he has come to embrace a preposterous superstition: everything that can be known is also

95. Mahood, M.M. Poetry and Humanism. Jonathan Cape, London. 1950. p. 61.

96. Wilson-Knight, G. The Golden Labyrinth. University Paperbacks. 1965. p. 57.

97. Heller, Erich. "Faustus' Damnation: the Morality of 'Knowledge'". Listener. Jan. 11, 1962. p. 60.

worth knowing - including the manifestly worthless. Galley-slaves of the free mind's aimless voyaging, we mistake our unrestrainable curiosity, the alarming symptom of spiritual tedium, for scientific passion.⁹⁸

If therefore one looks on Dr. Faustus as Marlowe's last word on the human predicament one cannot help realising that he was in this respect too very much ahead of his times. He presents the distortion and disintegration of the human personality in the present world, unable to compromise with faith and helpless to live without it, in terms that compare most favourably with some of the greatest western writers of today.

98. Ibid., p. 60.

CONCLUSION

Before attempting an assessment of the material in this thesis it might be prudent to state that there is a substantial body of disputed work which has been deliberately left out of consideration. Aside from certain translations into English from Latin poetry there are other dramatic works wishfully feathered onto Christopher Marlowe. Amongst these are Selimus, Loocrine, Edward III, The Troublesome Reign of King John, The True History of George Scanderbare, and An Alarum for London. Two plays of higher literary merit which are also attributed to Marlowe are Arden of Feversham and Last's Dominion. Shakespearean scholarship credits Marlowe with collaboration in King John, Henry VI, Titus Andronicus and The Taming of the Shrew. But such textual quibbles are out of the range of this thesis and the six plays examined herein are more than sufficient for one's purpose. Other dramatic creations would possibly shed further light on Marlowe's life, but his fundamental attitudes of mind and spirit are amply portrayed in the texts that are unquestionably his own.

In this thesis one has attempted to discover Marlowe's attitudes towards the history of his own times and of earlier ages. By history one is to understand the term in its fullest and widest application, i.e. the story of a people and all that makes them a people. In attempting to do this it is always imperative to put Marlowe into the proper perspective of his own times, and then to discover how far, if at all, he was in line with contemporary attitudes. When one examines this question it will be noticed that to give Marlowe a label is only begging the question. Writing of Dr. Faustus one critic states

The play is worked out in terms of medieval theology, which still dominated a large part of Marlowe's mind and imagination.¹

Others look at Marlowe as the fairest flower of the "pagan Renaissance".

A man of the Renaissance he is the incarnation of his age perhaps more than any of his fellow-countrymen.²

Others have labelled him as a dour, sombre pessimist.

He could however, find no real principle of order in the universe, no hope for human triumph over evil and the only consolation he could afford to mankind was in the heroic stature of a stoic acceptance and submission to what must be.³

To maintain such positive points of view is very difficult, specially with reference to a writer like Marlowe. The facts of his life are all too scanty and there are many gaps in his biography. His works exist in corrupt texts and their authenticity has been challenged. He met a premature end before the fullest development of his genius was possible - and yet definitive statements are made!

However one can say something definitive about his dealings with history as one finds it in his dramatic works. Broadly speaking Marlowe's point of view was that of the humanist historian.

Man, for the Renaissance historian, was not man as depicted by ancient philosophy, controlling his actions and creating his destiny by the work of his intellect, but man, as depicted by Christian thought, a creature of passion and impulse. History thus became the history of human passions, regarded as necessary manifestations of human nature.⁴

Another author writing of this humanist spirit has said -

This individualism meant a revolt against the bondage and the uniform solidarity of the medieval religious, moral

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1. Henderson, P. Christopher Marlowe. Longmans, Green and Co., London. 1952. p. 128.
 2. Poirier, M. Christopher Marlowe. Chatto and Windus, London. 1951. p. 44.
 3. Ribner, I. in Essays on Shakespearean and Elizabethan Drama. ed. Richard Hosley. Routledge and Kegan Paul, London. 1963. p. 113.
 4. Collingwood, R.G. The Idea of History. Clarendon Press, Oxford. 1946. p. 57.

and social order, the assertion of critical reason against asceticism, of the claims of the earth against those of heaven.⁵

This kind of approach tends to mark Marlowe as a man of the Renaissance. But one must remember that in the passage of time there are no water-tight compartments. Much of medieval belief and social patterns were carried over into the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. This can be seen clearly in a work such as Raleigh's History of the World.

Prof. Tillyard has condensed the Renaissance outlook on history to three salient features. Firstly, history being a collection of facts, helps man to foresee and prepare for the future. He is both forewarned and forearmed. This can be seen pervading all the writings of Marlowe. Tamberlane warns monarchs in particular and mankind in general of the inevitability of Death which humbles even the greatest. It teaches that God may use even the cruel man of violence to further His own divine purposes. Faustus warns against Pride; Barabas is a study in practical "politic". Secondly, history for the Renaissance, preserved noble deeds from oblivion. This was a great incentive and inspiration for man. Tamberlane and the Guise figure in the history of their times for their fearless pursuit of their own ends; Faustus is famous for his learning. Lastly, this incentive for posthumous glory has moral and ethical value. This is brilliantly illustrated by Edward II. Edward is remembered as a bad king and an ineffectual ruler. He serves as a horrid example.

There is quite a respectable body of evidence to show that the Elizabethans looked upon their dramatists as historians, since quite often both dealt with the same material. Shakespeare subtitled his drama on Henry VIII with the phrase "Or all is True".

5. Bush, Douglas. The Renaissance and English Humanism. University of Toronto Press. 1939. p. 19.

Heywood noted

Plays have made the ignorant more apprehensive, taught the unlearned the knowledge of many famous histories, instructed such as cannot read in the discovery of all our English Chronicles; and what man have you now that cannot discourse of any notable thing recorded even from William the Conqueror, nay from the landing of Brute until this day?⁶

As a proof of how historical information had filtered to all classes is evidenced by a passage from Her Morale.

Mine host was full of ale and history,

* * *

Why he could tell
The inch where Richmond stood, where Richard fell.
Besides what of his knowledge he could say,
He had authentic notice from the Play.⁷

Marlowe being a professional playwright could not have forgotten or deliberately ignored the educational aspect of his work.

In therefore assessing Marlowe's historical views and opinions Elizabethan England inevitably comes into the reckoning. Here it will be well to note that Marlowe does not give us a faithful photograph of contemporary England. There are no figures like Sir Toby Belch, Dogberry and Verges and Dame Quickly who are lifted from the bustling life of Elizabethan London and skilfully transferred onto the stage by their creator. Marlowe reflects more the temper and spirit of the times than the actual scenes.

One is primarily struck by the note of inquisitive, impatient inquiry in all that Marlowe wrote. Like our modern existentialist everything was to be tested by personal endeavour and experience and nothing was to be taken for granted. This attitude was largely due to his early influences, particularly that of Cambridge. Gabriel Harvey rather intolerantly criticised contemporary Cambridge for this and noted -

6. Heywood, Thomas. Apology. ed. Richard H. Perkinson. N.Y. 1941. p. 52.

7. Poems of Bishop Corbet. ed. Gilchrist, London. 1807. p. 193.

All are inquisitive after new books, new fashions, new laws...after new heavens and hells too. Every day fresh opinions; heresy in divinity, in philosophy, in humanity, in manners.⁸

Marlowe inquires into the life of Tarberlane the great conqueror and comes up with fresh insights - the world conqueror is a man fired with an insatiable thirst for power. He inquires into the current notions of Machiavelli and reveals its hollowness. Marlowe rebukes the Renaissance passion for knowledge by pointing out that knowledge without conscience is destructive. Marlowe was not content with the old, orthodox view of God working out His destiny in human affairs through human agents. He questioned the medieval axiom that "the essential meaning of history is to be found in the growth of the seed of eternity in the womb of time".⁹

Marlowe, rather appears to suggest that the seed of eternity is to be found in every human heart and only by human effort can the seed bear fruit. This was a fresh and original approach to the here and now.

Whatever may be the validity of the claims of the other world, simple human joys and loves on this side of the grave have a legitimate right to a large part of man's endeavour.¹⁰

All that Marlowe observed and wrote about was tested by this standard of measurement--how useful was it for man's life in this world. He saw politics, religion, social affairs and economy through the prism of the present. Even kingship was evaluated by its efficacious functioning in Elizabethan times. The Tudors very adroitly managed to have their own way in all things and yet broadcast the theory that they held power only under the mercy of God. The sacred

8. Harvey, Gabriel. "Meditations" in The Renaissance. Will Durant. Simon and Schuster. N.Y. 1953. p. 64.

9. Dawson, C. Dynamics of World History. Sheed and Ward, London, 1957. p. 249.

10. Berdayev, Nicholas. The Meaning of History. Geoffrey Miles, London. 1949. p. 140.

and quasi-sacerdotal character of Tudor monarchy finds its echo in the portrait of Edward II and in the attitude of Tamberlane's subjects to their ruler. The politicians were always on the side of reason and order and invoked Divinity to support their actions.

The humanist Marlowe in reading the signs of his times and of the world in past ages was shrewd enough to see that humanism was taking man into a cul de sac. Humanism was brilliant and expansive, humanism was a new vital force that made all human relations and activities assume new dimensions -- but humanism was in the last analysis self-destructive. It had the seeds of slow poison in its heart that later cause the collapse of the whole human personality. Humanism released man's creative energies from the fetters of theology, but it also made possible the chances of self-annihilation. Marlowe saw in Tamberlane, in Faustus, in Edward and in the Guise a gradual enlarging and broadening out of this liberal spirit.

Humanism, as the name implies, denotes the elevation and setting up of man in the centre of the universe. It signifies his rebellion, affirmation and discovery...But humanism contained a diametrically opposite principle...humanism denied that man was the image and likeness of God. In this way humanism tended to diminish Man's stature.¹¹

It is because Marlowe fully voiced this audacious principle of the Renaissance that he has been so widely acclaimed as the best of its prophets, not excluding Shakespeare. The picture of the Renaissance that Will Durant has so pithily summed up finds its most lyrical expression in Marlowe.

The qualities of this type revolved around two foci: intellectual and moral audacity.¹²

But to stop here will be only half the picture. In studying Marlowe's portraits of men and their times one cannot help but see

11. Berdayev, N. The Meaning of History. Geoffrey Bles, London. 1949. p. 140.

12. Durant, Will. The Renaissance. Simon and Schuster, N.Y. 1953. p. 581.

that Marlowe saw this "audacity", admirable though it was, as also tragic. Man demanding more and more and craving complete fulfilment ran against the very obstacle created by himself. Man's earlier interpretations ^{of} the natural and spiritual world would not satisfy, and he had destroyed all chance of a religious interpretation.

Marlowe was aware that he was living in an age of revolt, whose intellectuals were making the claim of self-sufficiency in innumerable ways. Marlowe may have shared in that revolt, but he had a clearer understanding than any of his contemporaries of its disastrous effects, and for this reason his tragedies record the disintegration of humanism.¹³

Given this view of his times Marlowe becomes a worthy forerunner of the moderns. In the twentieth century concepts of loneliness, alienation loss of identity and weltschmerz are current and writers have won many laurels for literature on these themes. One realises that the "sick hurry and divided aims" of modern life were seen and depicted in the sixteenth century by Marlowe.

In concluding, therefore, one tends to find that Marlowe's interpretation of history was strongly coloured by Renaissance humanism as taught at Cambridge and as breathed by the London intellectual of the late sixteenth century. This biased him in favour of a kindly and more tolerant view of man and of man's endeavours in a man-made society than the earlier writers had generally expressed. But at the same time he saw clearly enough the lessons of history to realise where man and his society were heading.

Finally it will perhaps be only rational to remember that

13. Mahood, M.M. Poetry and Humanism. Jonathan Cape, London, 1950. p. 85-6.

Marlowe wrote for the commercial theatre and this is where ultimately one must judge him. It is quite possible that certain themes and attitudes were taken up by him for dramatic demonstration only because they were eminently suited to his purpose. Wordsworth did the very same thing in another direction, as he himself confessed, with regard to the Immortality Ode.

I took hold of the notion of pre-existence as having sufficient foundation in humanity for authorising me to make for my purpose the best use of it I could as a poet.¹⁴

Marlowe might very well have been doing the same. Further one really knows so very little about him that it would be rather foolhardy to make definitive statements.

We cannot judge him with any finality, partly because great writers tend to exceed our grasp whatever we think to the contrary. Also because there are considerable gaps in our knowledge...Indeed if Marlowe were to see the extant body of work by which he is remembered, he might well wonder what all the fuss was about. And no doubt he would be very surprised by our answers.¹⁵

Marlowe would perhaps be surprised at many things and most of all if one should assume anything other than that drama was primary and any history or historical interpretation quite secondary.

14. Wordsworth, W. in Notes on Palgrave's Golden Treasury by Harinath De.

15. Steane, J.B. Marlowe. Cambridge University Press. 1964. p. 361-62.

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